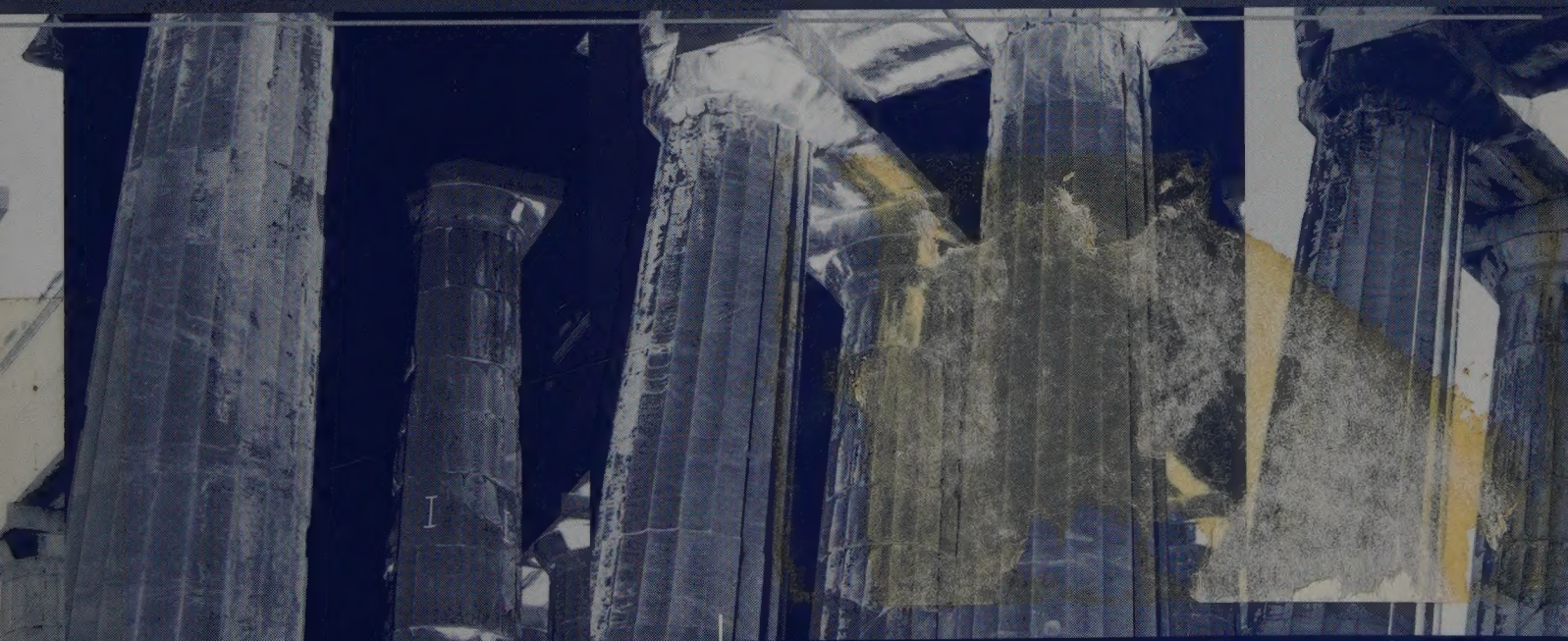


F O U R T H E D I T I O N

THE
HUMAN
RECORD

VOLUME A



ANDREA

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FOURTH EDITION

THE
HUMAN RECORD

VOLUME A

Alfred J. Andrea

University of Vermont

James Overfield

University of Vermont



Houghton Mifflin

Custom Publishing

Custom Publishing Editor: Dan Luciano
Custom Publishing Production Manager: Kathleen McCourt

Cover Designer: Joel Gendron
Cover Photograph: Photodisc

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Printed in the United States of America.

ISBN: 0-618-11564-1
3-98543

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 - CCI-02 01 00



Houghton Mifflin

Custom Publishing

222 Berkeley Street • Boston, MA 02116

Address all correspondence and order information to the above address.

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Preface

The fourth edition of *The Human Record: Sources of Global History* follows the pedagogical goals and academic principles that guided the first three editions. Foremost among these is our continuing commitment to the proposition that all students of history must meet the challenge of analyzing primary sources, thereby becoming active inquirers into the past. Involvement with primary-source evidence enables students to see that historical scholarship is primarily the intellectual process of drawing inferences and discovering patterns from clues yielded by the past, not of memorizing someone else's conclusions. Moreover, such analysis motivates students to learn by stimulating curiosity and imagination and helps them become critical thinkers who are comfortable with the complex challenges and ambiguities of life.

Themes and Structure

We have compiled a source collection that traces the intricate course of human history from the rise of the earliest civilizations to the present. Volume I follows the evolution of those cultures that most significantly influenced the history of the world from around 3500 B.C.E. to 1700 C.E., with emphasis on the development of the major religious, social, intellectual, and political traditions of the societies that flourished on that supercontinent known as the *Afro-Eurasian World*. Although our primary focus in Volume I is on the Eastern Hemisphere, we do not neglect the Americas. This first volume also concurrently develops the theme of the growing links and increasingly important exchanges among the world's cultures down to the early modern era. Volume II picks up this theme of growing human interconnectedness by tracing the gradual establishment of Western global hegemony; the simultaneous historical developments in other civilizations and societies around the world; the anti-Western, anticolonial movements of the twentieth century; and the emergence of today's integrated but still often bitterly divided world.

To address these themes in both the depth and breadth they deserve, we have chosen and fit into place selections that combine to present an overview of global history in mosaic form. Each source, in essence, serves two functions: It presents an intimate glimpse into some meaningful aspect of the human past and simultaneously contributes to the creation of a single large composition — an integrated history of the world. With this dual purpose in mind, we have been careful to avoid isolated sources that provide a taste of some culture or age but, by their dissociation, shed no light on patterns of cultural creation, continuity, change, and interchange — the essential components of world history.

In selecting and arranging the various pieces of our mosaic, we have sought to create a balanced picture of human history and to craft a book that reveals the contributions of the world's major cultures. We also have attempted to give our readers a collection of sources representing a wide variety of

perspectives and experiences. Believing that the study of history properly concerns every aspect of past human activity and thought, we have sought sources that mirror the practices and concerns of a wide variety of representative persons and groups.

Our pursuit of historical balance has also led us into the arena of artifactual evidence. Although most historians center their research on documents, the discipline requires us to consider all of the clues surrendered by the past, and these include its artifacts. Moreover, we have discovered that students enjoy analyzing artifacts and seem to remember vividly the conclusions they draw from them. For these reasons, we have included a number of illustrations of works of art and other artifacts, such as seals and coins, that users of this book can analyze as historical sources.

New to This Edition

We have been gratified with the positive response from colleagues and students to the first three editions of *The Human Record*. Many have taken the trouble to write or otherwise contact us to express their satisfaction. Because, however, no textbook is perfect, these correspondents have been equally generous in sharing their perceptions of how we might improve our book and meet more fully the needs of its readers. In response to such suggestions, we engaged in a major restructuring of Volume II in the second edition and an equally radical restructuring of Volume I in the third edition. Despite our overall satisfaction with these revisions, we believe that the changes incorporated in this fourth edition will make both volumes more interesting and useful to students and professors alike.

As difficult as it is to let go of sources that have proved valuable and important for us and our students (and our classroom has always been the laboratory in which we test and refine *The Human Record*), we are always searching for sources that enable us and our students to explore more fully and deeply the rich heritage of world history. For this reason, about a quarter of the sources that appear in the fourth edition are new. In Volume I, for example, we added an early Chinese text on medicine, *The Yellow Emperor's Classic of Medicine*, so students can make comparisons with Hippocrates' *On the Sacred Disease*, and two texts on visits to the Underworld, one from Virgil's *Aeneid*, and one from Muhammad ibn Ishaq's *The Life of the Messenger of God*, which balance similar visits in two other sources, *The Epic of Gilgamesh* and Homer's *Odyssey*. To illustrate major shifts in Chinese thought in the era of the Song Dynasty, we have included excerpts from the seminal Neo-Confucian writings of Zhu Xi. A new section in Chapter 12 illustrates the world as seen from China in the thirteenth century, from Europe in the fourteenth century, and from Korea in the fifteenth century. In Volume II, we have added, among others, new selections on Ming Era Confucianism (*Meritorious Deeds at No Cost*); the colonial experience in Africa and India (G. V. Joshi, "The Economic Results of Free Trade and Railway Extension"; Charlotte Maxeke, "Social Conditions among Bantu Women and Girls"; and Kabaka Daudi Chwa, "Educa-

tion, Civilization, and ‘Foreignization’ in Buganda”); the coming of the American and French revolutions (Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*, and excerpts from a prerevolutionary *cabier*); the Zionist movement (Hayyim Nahman Bialik, Speech at the Inauguration of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem); the decision to drop atomic bombs on Japan (the Franck Report and Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson’s “The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb”); and the origins of the Cold War (George Kennan’s Long Telegram and Nikolai Novikov’s Telegram of September 27, 1946). Numerous sources carried over from earlier editions have been revised and reconfigured. These include the selections from the Qur’an, the *Analects* of Confucius, Gunther of Pairis’s *Constantinopolitan History*, and Marco Polo’s descriptions of his travels in Asia in Volume I; and the writings of Martin Luther, Lenin, Mao Zedong, Adam Smith, Jahangir, and Mustafa Kemal in Volume II. In keeping with our goal of providing students a rich array of artifactual sources, we have added new artwork to both volumes. To Volume I we have added examples of fifth-century B.C.E. Hellenic art, second-century C.E. Roman imperial funerary sculptures, a sixth-century Byzantine ivory, and an early fifteenth-century Korean map; and to Volume II, another woodcut from the Reformation Era. In both volumes we have attempted to reflect the most up-to-date scholarly discoveries and controversies in our work. With that in mind we have extensively revised many of our commentaries and notes. As a result, more than one-third of the pages of each volume are essentially new.

Learning Aids

Source analysis initially can be a daunting challenge for any student. With this in mind, we have labored to make these selected sources as accessible as possible by providing the student-user with a variety of aids. First there is the *Prologue*, in which we explain, initially in a theoretical manner and then through concrete examples, how a student of history interprets written and artifactual sources. Next we offer *part, chapter, section, and individual source introductions* — all to help the reader place each selection into a meaningful context and understand each source’s historical significance. Because we consider *The Human Record* to be an interpretive overview of global history and therefore a survey of the major patterns of global history that stands on its own as a text, our introductions are significantly fuller than what one normally encounters in a book of sources.

Suggested *Questions for Analysis* precede each source; their purpose is to help the student make sense of each piece of evidence and wrest from it as much insight as possible. The questions are presented in a three-tiered format designed to resemble the historian’s approach to source analysis and to help students make historical comparisons on a global scale. The first several questions are usually quite specific and ask the reader to pick out important pieces of information. These initial questions require the student to address two issues: What does this document or artifact say, and what meaningful facts can I garner from it? Addressing concrete questions of this sort prepares

the student researcher for the next, more significant level of critical thinking and analysis: drawing inferences. Questions that demand inferential conclusions follow the fact-oriented questions. Finally, whenever possible, we offer a third tier of questions that challenge the student to compare the individual or society that produced a particular source with an individual, group, or culture encountered earlier in the volume. We believe such comparisons help students fix more firmly in their minds the distinguishing cultural characteristics of the various societies they encounter in their survey of world history. Beyond that, this underscores the fact that global history is, at least on one level, comparative history.

Another form of help we offer is to *gloss the sources*, explaining fully words and allusions that first-year college students cannot reasonably be expected to know. To facilitate reading and to encourage reference, the notes appear at the bottom of the page on which they are cited. A few documents also contain *interlinear notes* that serve as transitions or provide needed information.

Some instructors might use *The Human Record* as their sole textbook. Most, however, will probably use it as a supplement to a standard narrative textbook, and many of these professors might decide not to require their students to analyze every entry. To assist instructors (and students) in selecting sources that best suit their interests and needs, we have prepared *two analytical tables of contents* for each volume. The first lists readings and artifacts by geographic and cultural area, and the second by topic. The two tables of contents suggest to professor and student alike the rich variety of material available within these pages, particularly for essays in comparative history.

In summary, our goal in crafting *The Human Record* has been to do our best to prepare the student-reader for success — *success* being defined as comfort with historical analysis, proficiency in critical thinking, learning to view history on a global scale, and a deepened awareness of the rich cultural varieties, as well as shared characteristics, of the human family.

Using The Human Record: Suggestions from the Editors

Specific suggestions for assignments and classroom activities appear in the manual entitled *Using The Human Record: Suggestions from the Editors*. In it we explain why we have chosen the sources that appear in this book and what insights we believe students should be capable of drawing from them. We also describe classroom tactics for encouraging student thought and discussion on the various sources. The advice we present is the fruit of our own use of these sources in the classroom.

Feedback

As suggested above, we are always interested in receiving comments from professors and students who are using this book. Comments on the Prologue (which appears in each volume) and Volume I should be addressed to A. J. Andrea, whose e-mail address is <aandrea@zoo.uvm.edu>; comments on

Volume II should be addressed to J. H. Overfield at <joverfie@zoo.uvm.edu>. The fact that our university's computer center decided to give the faculty an e-mail address that contains the designation "zoo" opens a line of speculation into which we dare not venture.

Acknowledgments

We are in debt to the many professionals who offered their expert advice and assistance during the various incarnations of *The Human Record*. Scholars and friends at the University of Vermont who generously shared their expertise with us over the years as we crafted these four editions include Doris Bergen, Robert V. Daniels, Carolyn Elliott, Shirley Gedeon, Erik Gilbert, William Haviland, Walter Hawthorn, Richard Horowitz, David Massell, Kristin M. Peterson-Ishaq, Abubaker Saad, Wolfe W. Schmokel, Peter Seybolt, John W. Seyller, Sean Stilwell, Mark Stoler, Marshall True, Diane Villemaire, and Denise Youngblood. We are also in debt to the many reference librarians at the University of Vermont, who have cheerfully helped us in countless ways through all four editions. Additionally, Tara Coram of the Freer and Sackler museums of the Smithsonian Institution deserves special thanks for the assistance she rendered A. J. Andrea in his exploration into the Asian art holdings of the two museums.

We wish also to acknowledge the following instructors who read and commented on portions of this edition in its earliest stages of revision: Blake Beattie, University of Louisville; Frank A. Gerome, James Madison University; Matthew Gordon, Miami University; Joseph Kirklighter, Auburn University; Robert V. Kubicek, University of British Columbia.

Finally, our debt to our beloved spouses is beyond payment, but the dedication to them of each edition of this book reflects in some small way how deeply we appreciate their constant support and good-humored tolerance.

A. J. A.
J. H. O.

Prologue

Primary Sources and How We Read Them

What Is History?

Many students believe that the study of history involves nothing more than memorizing dates, names, battles, treaties, and endless numbers of similar, often uninteresting facts with no apparent relevance to their lives and concerns. After all, so they think, the past is over and done with. Historians know what has happened, and all students have to do is absorb this body of knowledge.

But these notions are wrong. *History involves discovery and interpretation, and its content is vitally relevant to our lives.* Our understanding of history is constantly changing and deepening as historians learn more about the past by discovering new evidence as well as by re-examining old evidence with new questions and methods of analysis. Furthermore, each person who studies the past brings to it a unique perspective and raises questions that are meaningful to that individual. The drive to understand what has gone before us is innately human and springs from our need to know who we are. History serves this function of self-discovery in a special way because of its universality. In short, *the study of history deals with all aspects of past human activity and belief, for there is no subject or concern that lacks a history.* Therefore, each of us can and should explore the origins and historical evolution of whatever is most important to us. Beyond that, history exposes us to new interests, new ways of perceiving reality, and new vistas as we study cultures and times that once were quite unknown to us but which, through our study of the human past, become quite familiar to us.

Regardless of what our questions and interests, old or new, might be, the study and interpretation of our historical heritage involves coming to grips with the dynamics of the historical process. It means exploring how human societies reacted to challenges, threats, and opportunities and how they sought to reshape themselves and the world about them to meet their needs. It means exploring the complex interplay of geography, technology, religion, social structures, and a myriad of other historical factors. It means exploring the ways societies change and the ways they resist change. It means exploring the traditions that have imprinted themselves upon a culture and the ways those traditions have provided continuity over long periods of time. It means exploring the roles of individuals in shaping the course of history and the ways individuals have been shaped by historical circumstances. Indeed, the questions we ask of the past are limited only by our imaginations; the answers we

arrive at are limited only by the evidence and our ability to use that evidence thoroughly and creatively.

This collection of sources will help you discover some of the major lines of global historical development and understand many of the major cultural traditions and forces that have shaped history around the world. The word *history*, which is Greek in origin, means “learning through inquiry,” and that is precisely what historians do. They discover and interpret the past by asking questions and conducting research. Their inquiry revolves around an examination of evidence left by the past. For lack of a better term, historians call that evidence *primary source material*.

Primary Sources: Their Value and Limitations

Primary sources are records that for the most part have been passed on in written form, thereby preserving the memory of past events. These written sources include, but are not limited to, official records, law codes, private correspondence, literature, religious texts, merchants’ account books, memoirs, and the list goes on and on. No source by itself contains unadulterated truth or the whole picture. Each gives us only a glimpse of reality, and it is the historian’s task to fit these fragments of the past into a coherent picture.

Imagine for a moment that a mid-twenty-first-century historian decides to write a history of your college class. Think about the primary sources this researcher would use: the school catalogue, class lists, academic transcripts, and similar official documents; class lecture notes, course syllabi, examinations, term papers, and possibly even textbooks; diaries and private letters; the school newspaper, yearbooks, and sports programs; handbills, posters, and even photographs of graffiti; recollections written down or otherwise recorded by some of your classmates long after they graduated. With a bit of thought you could add other items to the list, among them some unwritten sources, such as recordings of popular music and photographs and videotapes of student life and activity. But let us confine ourselves, for the moment, to written records. What do all these documentary sources have in common?

Even this imposing list of sources does not present the past in its entirety. Where do we see the evidence that never made it into any written record, including long telephone calls home, e-mail notes to friends and professors, all-night study groups, afternoons spent at the student union, complaints shared among classmates about professors and courses? Someone possibly recorded memories of some of these events and opinions, but how complete and trustworthy is such evidence? Also consider that all the documents available to this future historian will be fortunate survivors. They will represent only a small percentage of the vast bulk of written material generated during your college career. Thanks to the wastebasket, the “delete” key, the disintegration of materials, and the inevitable loss of life’s memorabilia as years slip by, the evidence available to any future historian will be fragmentary. This is always the case with historical evidence. We cannot preserve the records of

the past in their totality. Clearly, the more remote the past, the more fragmentary our documentary evidence will be. Imagine the feeble chance any particular document from the twelfth century had of surviving the wars, worms, and wastebaskets of the past eight hundred years.

Now let us consider the many individual pieces of surviving documentary evidence relating to your class's history. As we review the list, we see that no single primary source gives us a complete or totally unbiased picture. Each has its perspective, value, and limitations. Imagine that the personal essays submitted by applicants for admission were a historian's only sources of information about the student body. Would it not then be reasonable for this researcher to conclude that the school attracted only the most gifted and interesting people imaginable?

Despite their flaws, however, essays composed by applicants for admission are still important pieces of historical evidence — when used judiciously. They certainly reflect the would-be students' perceptions of the school's cultural values and the types of people it hopes to attract, and usually the applicants are right on the mark because they have read the school's catalogue — itself an exercise in creative advertising. That catalogue, of course, presents an idealized picture of campus life. But it has value for the careful researcher because it reflects the values of the faculty and administrators who composed it. It also provides useful information regarding rules and regulations, courses, instructors, school organizations, and similar items. That factual information, however, is the raw material of history, not history itself, and certainly it does not reflect the full historical reality of your class's collective experience.

What is true of the catalogue is equally true of the student newspaper and every other piece of evidence pertinent to your class. Each primary source is a part of a larger whole, but as we have already seen, we do not have all the pieces. Think of historical evidence in terms of a jigsaw puzzle. Many of the pieces are missing, but it is possible to put most, though probably not all, of the remaining pieces together in a reasonable fashion to form a fairly accurate and coherent picture. The picture that emerges might not be complete (it never is), but it is useful and valid. The keys to fitting these pieces together are hard work and imagination. Each is absolutely necessary.

Examining the Sources

Hard work speaks for itself, but students are often unaware that the historian also needs imagination to reconstruct the past. After all, many students ask, doesn't history consist of strictly defined and irrefutable dates, names, and facts? Where does imagination enter into the process of learning these facts?

Again, let us consider your class's history and its documentary sources. Many of those documents provide factual data — dates, names, grades, statistics. While these data are important, individually and collectively they have no historical meaning until they have been *interpreted*. Your college class is more than a collection of statistics and facts. It is a group of individuals who, despite their differences, share and help mold a collective experience. It is a

community evolving within a particular time and place. Influenced by its environment, it is, in turn, an influence on that environment. Any valid or useful history must reach beyond dates, names, and facts and interpret the historical characteristics and role of your class. What were its values? How did it change and why? What impact did it have? These are some of the important questions a historian asks of the evidence. The answers the historian achieves help us gain insight into ourselves, our society, and our human nature.

To arrive at answers, the historian must examine each and every piece of relevant evidence in its full context and wring from that evidence as many *inferences* as possible. Facts are the foundation stones of history, but inferences are its edifices. *An inference is a logical conclusion drawn from evidence, and it is the heart and soul of historical inquiry.*

Every American schoolchild learns that “In fourteen hundred and ninety-two, Columbus sailed the ocean blue.” That fact is worthless, however, unless the individual understands the motives, causes, and significance of this late-fifteenth-century voyage. Certainly a historian must know when Columbus sailed west. After all, time is history’s framework. *Yet the questions historians ask go far beyond simple chronology.* Why did Columbus sail west? What factors made possible Spain’s engagement in such enterprises at this time? Why were Europeans willing and able to exploit, as they did, the so-called New World? What were the short- and long-term consequences of the European presence in the Americas? These are some of the significant questions to which historians seek inferential answers, and those answers can only be found in the evidence.

One noted historian, Robin Winks, has written a book titled *The Historian as Detective*, and the image is appropriate although inexact. Like the detective, the historian examines clues in order to reconstruct events. The detective, however, is essentially interested in discovering what happened, who did it, and why, whereas the historian goes one step beyond and asks what it all means. *In addressing the question of meaning, the historian transforms simple curiosity about past events into a humanistic discipline.*

As a humanist, the historian seeks insight into the human condition, but that insight cannot be based on theories spun out of fantasy, wishful thinking, or preconceived notions. It must be based on a methodical and probing investigation of the evidence. Like a detective interrogating witnesses, the historian also must carefully examine the testimony of sources. First and foremost, the historian must evaluate the *validity* of the source. Is it what it purports to be? Artful forgeries have misled many historians. Even if the source is authentic (and most are), it still can be misleading. The possibility always exists that the source’s author lied or deliberately misrepresented reality. Even if this is not the case, the historian can easily be led astray by not fully understanding the *perspective* reflected in the document. As any detective who has examined a number of eyewitnesses to an event knows, witnesses’ reports often differ radically. The detective has the opportunity to re-examine witnesses and offer them the opportunity to change their testimony in the light

of new evidence and deeper reflection. The historian is usually not so fortunate. Even when the historian compares a piece of documentary evidence with other evidence in order to uncover its flaws, there is no way to cross-examine it. Given this fact, it is absolutely necessary for the historian to understand as fully as possible the source's perspective. Thus, the historian must ask several key questions — all of which share the letter W. *What* kind of document is this? *Who* wrote it? *For whom* and *why*? *Where* was it composed and *when*?

The *what* is important because understanding the nature of a particular source can save the historian a great deal of frustration. Many historical sources simply do not address the questions a historian would like to ask of them. That future historian would be foolish to try to learn much about the academic quality of your school's courses from a study of the registrar's class lists and grade sheets. Student and faculty class notes, copies of syllabi, examinations, papers, and textbooks would be far more useful sources.

Who, *for whom*, and *why* are equally important questions. The school catalogue undoubtedly addresses some issues pertaining to student social life. But should this document — designed to attract potential students and to place the school in the best possible light — be read and accepted uncritically? Obviously not. It must be tested against student testimony, which is discovered in such sources as private letters, memoirs, posters, the student newspaper, and the yearbook.

Where and *when* are also important questions to ask of any primary source. As a rule, distance in space and time from an event colors perceptions and can diminish the validity of a source's testimony. The recollections of a person celebrating a twenty-fifth class reunion could be insightful and valuable. Conceivably this graduate now has a perspective and information that he or she lacked a quarter of a century earlier. Just as conceivably, however, that person's memory might be playing tricks. A source can be so close to or so distant from the event it deals with that its view is distorted or totally erroneous. Even so, the source is not necessarily worthless. Often the blind spots and misinformation within a source reveal to the researcher important insights into the author's attitudes and sources of information.

The historical detective's task is difficult. In addition to constantly questioning the validity and particular perspectives of available sources, the historical researcher must often use whatever evidence is available in imaginative ways. The researcher must interpret these fragmentary and flawed glimpses of the past and piece together the resultant inferences and insights as well as possible. While recognizing that a complete picture of the past is impossible, the historian assumes the responsibility of recreating a past that is valid and has meaning for the present.

You and the Sources

This book will actively involve you in the work of historical inquiry by asking you to draw inferences based on your analysis of primary source evidence. This is

not an easy task, especially at first, but it is well within your capability. Moreover, your professor and we, the authors, will be helping you all along the way.

You realize by now that historians do not base their conclusions on analysis of a single isolated source. Historical research consists of laborious sifting through mountains of documents. We have already done much of this work for you by selecting, paring down, and annotating important sources that individually allow you to gain some significant insight into a particular issue or moment in the long and complex history of our global community. In doing this for you, we do not relieve you of the responsibility of recognizing that no single source, no matter how rich it might appear, offers a complete picture of the individual or culture that produced it. Each source that appears in this book is a piece of valuable evidence, but you should not forget that it is only partial evidence.

You will analyze two types of evidence: documents and artifacts. Each source will be authentic, so you do not have to worry about validating it. We will also supply you with the information necessary to place each piece of evidence into its proper context and will suggest questions you legitimately can and should ask of each source. If you carefully read the introductions and notes, the suggested Questions for Analysis, and, most important of all, the sources themselves — and think about what you are doing — solid inferences will follow.

To illustrate how you should go about this task and what is expected of you, we will take you through a sample exercise, step by step. We will analyze two sources: a document from the pen of Christopher Columbus and an early sixteenth-century woodcut. By the end of this exercise, if you have worked closely with us, you should be ready to begin interpreting sources on your own.

Let us now look at the document. We present it just as it would appear in any chapter of this book: first an introduction, then suggested Questions for Analysis, and finally the source itself, with explanatory notes. Because we want to give you a full introduction to the art of documentary source analysis, this excerpt is longer than most documents in this book. Also, to help you refer back to the letter as we analyze it, we have numbered each fifth line. No other sources in this book will have numbered lines. Our notes that comment on the text are probably fuller than necessary, but we prefer to err on the side of providing too much information and help rather than too little. But do not let the length of the document or its many notes intimidate you. Once you get into the source, you should find it fairly easy going.

Your first step in analyzing any source in this book is to read the introduction and the Questions for Analysis. The former places the source into context; the latter provide direction when it comes time to analyze the source. One important point to keep in mind is that every historian approaches a source with at least one question, even though it might be vaguely formulated. Like the detective, the historian wants to discover some particular truth or shed light on an issue. This requires asking specific questions of the wit-

nesses or, in the historian's case, of the evidence. These questions should not be prejudgments. One of the worst errors a historian can make is setting out to prove a point or to defend an ideological position. Questions are simply starting points, nothing else, but they are essential. Therefore, as you approach a source, have your question or questions fixed in your mind and constantly remind yourself as you work your way through a source what issue or issues you are investigating. We have provided you with a number of suggested questions for each source. Perhaps you or your professor will want to ask other questions. Whatever the case, keep focused on these questions and issues, and take notes as you read each source. Never rely on unaided memory; it will almost inevitably lead you astray.

Above all else, you must be honest and thorough as you study a source. Read each explanatory footnote carefully, lest you misunderstand a word or an allusion. Try to understand exactly what the source is saying and what its author's perspective is. Be careful not to wrench items, words, or ideas out of context, thereby distorting them. Above all, read the entire source so that you understand as fully as possible what it says and, just as important, what it does not say.

This is not as difficult as it sounds. It just takes concentration and a bit of work. To illustrate the point, let us read and analyze Christopher Columbus's letter and, in the process, try to answer the core question: What evidence is there in this document that allows us to judge Columbus's reliability as a reporter? By addressing this issue, we will actually answer questions 1–5 and 8.

“With the Royal Standard Unfurled”



▼ *Christopher Columbus,* A LETTER CONCERNING RECENTLY DISCOVERED ISLANDS

Sixteenth-century Spain's emergence as the dominant power in the Americas is forever associated with the name of a single mariner — Christopher Columbus (1451–1506). Sponsored by King Ferdinand II of Aragon and Queen Isabella I of Castile, this Genoese sea captain sailed west into the Atlantic seeking a new route to the empires of East Asia described by John Mandeville (Volume I, Chapter 12, source 102), Marco Polo (Volume I, Chapter 12, source 105), and other travel writers he had avidly read. On October 12, 1492, his fleet of three ships dropped anchor at a small Bahamian island, which Columbus claimed for Spain, naming it San Salvador. The fleet then sailed to two larger islands, which he named Juana and Española (today known as Cuba and Hispaniola).

After exploring these two islands and establishing on Española the fort of Navidad del Señor, Columbus departed for Spain in January 1493. On his way home, the admiral prepared a preliminary account of his expedition to the “Indies” for Luis de Santángel, a counselor to King Ferdinand and one of Columbus's enthusiastic supporters. In composing the letter, Columbus borrowed heavily

from his official ship's log, often lifting passages verbatim. When he landed in Lisbon in early March, Columbus dispatched the letter overland, expecting it to precede him to the Spanish royal court in faraway Barcelona, where Santánel would communicate its contents to the two monarchs. The admiral was not disappointed. His triumphal reception at the court in April was proof that the letter had served its purpose.

As you analyze the document, be aware of several facts. The admiral was returning with only two of his vessels. He had lost his flagship, the *Santa Maria*, when it was wrecked on a reef off present-day Haiti on Christmas Day. Also, many of Columbus's facts and figures reflect more his enthusiasm than dispassionate analysis. His estimates of the dimensions of the two main islands he explored grossly exaggerate their sizes, and his optimistic report of the wide availability of such riches as gold, spices, cotton, and mastic was not borne out by subsequent explorations and colonization. Although he obtained items of gold and received plenty of reports of nearby gold mines, the metal was rare in the islands. Moreover, the only indigenous spice proved to be the fiery chili pepper; the wild cotton was excellent but not plentiful; and mastic, an eastern Mediterranean aromatic gum, did not exist in the Caribbean.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. What does Columbus's description of the physical attributes of the islands suggest about the motives for his voyage?
2. Often the eyes only see what the mind prepares them to see. Is there any evidence that Columbus saw what he wanted to see and discovered what he expected to discover?
3. Is there any evidence that Columbus's letter was a carefully crafted piece of self-promotion by a person determined to prove he had reached the Indies?
4. Is there any evidence that Columbus attempted to present an objective and fairly accurate account of what he had seen and experienced?
5. In light of your answers to questions 3 and 4, to what extent, if at all, can we trust Columbus's account?
6. What do the admiral's admitted actions regarding the natives and the ways in which he describes these people allow us to conclude about his attitudes toward these "Indians" and his plans for them?
7. What does this letter tell us about the culture of the Tainos on the eve of European expansion into their world? Is there anything that Columbus tells us about these people that does not seem to ring totally true?
8. How, if at all, does this letter illustrate that a single historical source read in isolation can mislead the researcher?

1 Sir, as I know that you will be pleased at the
great victory with which Our Lord has crowned
my voyage, I write this to you, from which you
will learn how in thirty-three days, I passed from
5 the Canary Islands to the Indies¹ with the fleet
which the most illustrious king and queen, our
sovereigns, gave to me. And there I found very
many islands filled with people² innumerable,
and of them all I have taken possession for their
10 highnesses, by proclamation made and with the
royal standard unfurled, and no opposition was
offered to me. To the first island which I found,
I gave the name *San Salvador*.³ in remembrance
of the Divine Majesty, Who has marvelously be-
15 stowed all this; the Indians call it "Guanahani."
To the second, I gave the name *Isla de Santa Maria
de Concepción*;⁴ to the third, *Fernandina*; to the
fourth, *Isabella*; to the fifth, *Isla Juana*,⁵ and so
to each one I gave a new name.

20 When I reached Juana, I followed its coast to
the westward, and I found it to be so extensive
that I thought that it must be the mainland, the
province of Catayo.⁶ And since there were nei-
ther towns nor villages on the seashore, but only
25 small hamlets, with the people of which I could
not have speech, because they all fled immedi-
ately, I went forward on the same course, think-
ing that I should not fail to find great cities and
towns. And, at the end of many leagues,⁷ seeing
30 that there was no change and that the coast was
bearing me northwards, which I wished to avoid,
since winter was already beginning, . . . [I] re-
traced my path as far as a certain harbor known
to me. And from that point, I sent two men in-
35 land to learn if there were a king or great cities.
They traveled three days' journey and found an

infinity of small hamlets and people without
number, but nothing of importance. For this rea-
son, they returned.

I understood sufficiently from other Indians, 40
whom I had already taken,⁸ that this land was
nothing but an island. And therefore I followed
its coast eastwards for one hundred and seven
leagues to the point where it ended. And from
that cape, I saw another island, distant eighteen 45
leagues from the former, to the east, to which I
at once gave the name "Española." And I went
there and followed its northern coast, as I had in
the case of Juana, to the eastward for one hun-
dred and eighty-eight great leagues in a straight 50
line. This island and all the others are very fer-
tile to a limitless degree, and this island is ex-
tremely so. In it there are many harbors on the
coast of the sea, beyond comparison with others
which I know in Christendom, and many rivers, 55
good and large, which is marvelous. Its lands are
high, and there are in it very many sierras and
very lofty mountains, beyond comparison with
the island of Teneriffe.⁹ All are most beautiful,
of a thousand shapes, and all are accessible and 60
filled with trees of a thousand kinds and tall,
and they seem to touch the sky. And I am told
that they never lose their foliage, as I can under-
stand, for I saw them as green and as lovely as
they are in Spain in May, and some of them were 65
flowering, some bearing fruit, and some in an-
other stage, according to their nature. And the
nightingale was singing and other birds of a
thousand kinds in the month of November there
where I went. There are six or eight kinds of 70
palm, which are a wonder to behold on account
of their beautiful variety, but so are the other

¹An inexact term that referred to the entire area of the Indian Ocean and East Asia.

²Tainos. See Volume I, Chapter 11, source 98.

³"Holy Savior," Jesus Christ.

⁴"The Island of Holy Mary of the Immaculate Conception." Catholics believe that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was absolutely sinless, to the point that she was conceived without the stain of Original Sin (the sin of Adam and Eve) on her soul.

⁵Named for Prince Juan, heir apparent of Castile.

⁶The Spanish term for *Cathay*, which technically was only northern China. Columbus, however, used the term to refer to the entire Chinese Empire of the Great Khan (see note 20).

⁷A league is three miles.

⁸Columbus took seven Tainos on board at San Salvador to instruct them in Spanish and use them as guides and interpreters.

⁹One of the Canary Islands.

trees and fruits and plants. In it are marvelous pine groves, and there are very large tracts of cultivatable lands, and there is honey, and there are birds of many kinds and fruits in great diversity. In the interior are mines of metals, and the population is without number. Española is a marvel.

The sierras and mountains, the plains and arable lands and pastures, are so lovely and rich for planting and sowing, for breeding cattle of every kind, for building towns and villages. The harbors of the sea here are such as cannot be believed to exist unless they have been seen, and so with the rivers, many and great, and good waters, the majority of which contain gold. In the trees and fruits and plants, there is a great difference from those of Juana. In this island, there are many spices and great mines of gold and of other metals.

The people of this island, and of all the other islands which I have found and of which I have information, all go naked, men and women, as their mothers bore them,¹⁰ although some women cover a single place with the leaf of a plant or with a net of cotton which they make for the purpose. They have no iron or steel or weapons, nor are they fitted to use them, not because they are not well built men and of handsome stature, but because they are very marvelously timorous. They have no other arms than weapons made of canes, cut in seeding time, to the ends of which they fix a small sharpened stick. And they do not dare to make use of these, for many times it has happened that I have sent ashore two or three men to some town to have speech, and countless people have come out to them, and as soon as they have seen my men approaching they have fled, even a father not waiting for his son. And this, not because ill has been

done to anyone; on the contrary, at every point where I have been and have been able to have speech, I have given to them of all that I had, such as cloth and many other things, without receiving anything for it; but so they are, incurably timid. It is true that, after they have been reassured and have lost their fear, they are so guileless and so generous with all they possess, that no one would believe it who has not seen it. They never refuse anything which they possess, if it be asked of them; on the contrary, they invite anyone to share it, and display as much love as if they would give their hearts, and whether the thing be of value or whether it be of small price, at once with whatever trifle of whatever kind it may be that is given to them, with that they are content.¹¹ I forbade that they should be given things so worthless as fragments of broken crockery and scraps of broken glass, and ends of straps, although when they were able to get them, they fancied that they possessed the best jewel in the world. So it was found that a sailor for a strap received gold to the weight of two and a half *castellanos*,¹² and others much more for other things which were worth much less. As for new *blancas*,¹³ for them they would give everything which they had, although it might be two or three *castellanos*' weight of gold or an *arroba*¹⁴ or two of spun cotton. . . . They took even the pieces of the broken hoops of the wine barrels and, like savages, gave what they had, so that it seemed to me to be wrong and I forbade it. And I gave a thousand handsome good things, which I had brought, in order that they might conceive affection, and more than that, might become Christians and be inclined to the love and service of their highnesses and of the whole Castilian nation, and strive to aid us and to give

¹⁰Marco Polo described a number of islanders in South Asia who went naked. Compare also Columbus's description of this nudity with John Mandeville's account of the people of Sumatra in Volume I, Chapter 12, source 102.

¹¹Compare this with Mandeville's description of the people of Sumatra's attitude toward possessions (Volume I, Chapter 12, source 102).

¹²A gold coin of considerable value that bore the seal of Castile.

¹³The smallest and least valuable Spanish coin, it was worth about one-sixtieth of a *castellano*. Composed of billon, a mixture of copper and silver, it had a whitish hue, hence the name *blanca*, or white.

¹⁴The equivalent of about sixteen skeins, or balls, of spun textile.

us of the things which they have in abundance
 150 and which are necessary to us. And they do not
 know any creed and are not idolaters;¹⁵ only they
 all believe that power and good are in the heav-
 ens, and they are very firmly convinced that I,
 155 with these ships and men, came from the heav-
 ens, and in this belief they everywhere received
 me, after they had overcome their fear. And this
 does not come because they are ignorant; on the
 contrary, they are of a very acute intelligence and
 are men who navigate all those seas, so that it is
 160 amazing how good an account they give of ev-
 erything, but it is because they have never seen
 people clothed or ships of such a kind.

And as soon as I arrived in the Indies, in the
 first island which I found, I took by force some
 165 of them, in order that they might learn and give
 me information of that which there is in those
 parts, and so it was that they soon understood
 us, and we them, either by speech or signs, and
 they have been very serviceable. I still take them
 170 with me, and they are always assured that I come
 from Heaven, for all the intercourse which they
 have had with me; and they were the first to an-
 nounce this wherever I went, and the others went
 running from house to house and to the neigh-
 175 boring towns, with loud cries of, "Come! Come
 to see the people from Heaven!" So all, men and
 women alike, when their minds were set at rest
 concerning us, came, so that not one, great or
 small, remained behind, and all brought some-
 180 thing to eat and drink, which they gave with
 extraordinary affection. In all the island, they
 have very many canoes, like rowing *fustas*,¹⁶ some
 larger, some smaller, and some are larger than a

fusta of eighteen benches. They are not so broad,
 because they are made of a single log of wood, 185
 but a *fusta* would not keep up with them in row-
 ing, since their speed is a thing incredible. And
 in these they navigate among all those islands,
 which are innumerable, and carry their goods.
 One of these canoes I have seen with seventy and 190
 eighty men in her, and each one with his oar.

In all these islands, I saw no great diversity in
 the appearance of the people or in their manners
 and language. On the contrary, they all under-
 stand one another,¹⁷ which is a very curious thing, 195
 on account of which I hope that their highnesses
 will determine upon their conversion to our holy
 faith, towards which they are very inclined.

I have already said how I have gone one hun-
 dred and seven leagues in a straight line from 200
 west to east along the seashore of the island Juana,
 and as a result of that voyage, I can say that this
 island is larger than England and Scotland to-
 gether, for, beyond these one hundred and seven
 leagues, there remain to the westward two prov- 205
 inces to which I have not gone. One of these prov-
 inces they call "Avan,"¹⁸ and there the people
 are born with tails;¹⁹ and these provinces cannot
 have a length of less than fifty or sixty leagues,
 as I could understand from those Indians whom 210
 I have and who know all the islands.

The other, Española, has a circumference
 greater than all Spain, . . . since I voyaged along
 one side one hundred and eighty-eight great
 leagues in a straight line from west to east. It is 215
 a land to be desired and, seen, it is never to be
 left. And . . . I have taken possession for their
 highnesses . . . in this Española, in [a] situation

¹⁵Normally the term *idolater* means anyone who worships idols, or sacred statues, but it is unclear exactly what Columbus means here. The Tainos worshipped a variety of deities and spirits known as *cemis*, whom they represented in stone statues and other handcrafted images, also known as *cemis*. For further information on Taino *cemis* see Volume I, Chapter 11, source 98. It is hard to imagine Columbus's not having seen carved *cemis*, which filled the Tainos' villages. To compound the problem of what Columbus meant by their not being idolaters, consider lines 297–299 of this letter, where the admiral refers to idolaters who will be enslaved.

¹⁶A small oared boat, often having one or two masts.

¹⁷This is not totally accurate. Columbus's Taino interpreters knew only a little of the language of the Ciguayos whom the admiral encountered on Española in January 1493 (see note 27).

¹⁸Which the Spaniards transformed into La Habana, or Havana.

¹⁹Marco Polo reported the existence of tailed humans in the islands of Southeast Asia. In his description of the various fantastic people who supposedly inhabited the islands of Southeast Asia, John Mandeville listed hairy persons who walked on all fours and climbed trees.

most convenient and in the best position for the
 220 mines of gold and for all intercourse as well with
 the mainland . . . belonging to the Grand Khan,²⁰
 where will be great trade and gain. I have taken
 possession of a large town, to which I gave the
 name *Villa de Navidad*,²¹ and in it I have made
 225 fortifications and a fort, which now will by this
 time be entirely finished, and I have left in it
 sufficient men for such a purpose with arms and
 artillery and provisions for more than a year, and
 a *fusta*, and one, a master of all seacraft, to build
 230 others, and great friendship with the king of that
 land, so much so, that he was proud to call me,
 and to treat me as a brother. And even if he were
 to change his attitude to one of hostility towards
 these men, he and his do not know what arms
 235 are and they go naked, as I have already said,
 and are the most timorous people that there are
 in the world, so that the men whom I have left
 there alone would suffice to destroy all that land,
 and the island is without danger for their per-
 240 sons, if they know how to govern themselves.²²

In all these islands, it seems to me that all men
 are content with one woman, and to their chief
 or king they give as many as twenty.²³ It appears
 to me that the women work more than the men.
 245 And I have not been able to learn if they hold
 private property; what seemed to me to appear

was that, in that which one had, all took a share,
 especially of eatable things.²⁴

In these islands I have so far found no human
 monstrosities, as many expected,²⁵ but on the 250
 contrary the whole population is very well-
 formed, nor are they negroes as in Guinea,²⁶ but
 their hair is flowing, and they are not born where
 there is intense force in the rays of the sun; it is
 true that the sun has there great power, . . . 255

As I have found no monsters, so I have had no
 report of any, except in an island "Quaris," the
 second at the coming into the Indies, which is
 inhabited by a people who are regarded in all
 the islands as very fierce and who eat human flesh. 260
 They have many canoes with which they range
 through all the islands of India and pillage and
 take as much as they can.²⁷ They are no more
 malformed than the others, except that they have
 the custom of wearing their hair long like 265
 women, and they use bows and arrows of the same
 cane stems, with a small piece of wood at the
 end, owing to lack of iron which they do not
 possess. They are ferocious among these other
 people who are cowardly to an excessive degree, 270
 but I make no more account of them than of the
 rest. These are those who have intercourse with
 the women of "Matinino," which is the first
 island met on the way from Spain to the Indies,

²⁰The Mongol emperor of Cathay. Columbus did not know that the Mongol khans had been expelled from power in China in 1368.

²¹"Village of the Nativity" (of the Lord). The destruction of the *Santa Maria* off the coast of Española on Christmas Day (Navidad del Señor) forced Columbus to leave behind thirty-nine sailors at the village garrison, which he named after the day of the incident.

²²When Columbus returned to Española in November 1493, he discovered the fortification burned to the ground and all thirty-nine men dead. Almost as soon as Columbus had sailed away, the Spaniards began fighting among themselves and split into factions, with only eleven remaining to garrison the fort. The widely scattered groups of Spaniards were wiped out by Tainos led by a chief named Caonabó. Guacanagarí, the king to whom Columbus refers, apparently was wounded trying to defend the Spaniards.

²³Generally only chiefs could afford large numbers of wives because of the substantial bride prices that were paid, in goods or services, to the families of the women. Notwithstanding, many commoners could and did have two or three wives.

²⁴See note 11.

²⁵Europeans were prepared to find various races of monstrous humans and semi-humans in the Indies. Accepted accounts of the wonders of the East, such as the travelogue of John Mandeville, told of dog-headed people and a species of individuals who, lacking heads, had an eye on each shoulder. These stories had been inherited from ancient Greek, Roman, and Arabic ethnographies.

²⁶Sub-Saharan West Africa (see Volume I, Chapter 12, source 111).

²⁷These were the Caribs, who shortly before the arrival of Columbus began to displace the Arawak peoples of the Lesser Antilles, the archipelago to the east and south of Hispaniola. Sixteenth-century Spanish writers unanimously agreed that the Caribs were fierce warriors and cannibalistic. On January 13, 1493, Columbus and his men had a short skirmish on Española with some previously unknown natives, who the admiral incorrectly assumed were Caribs. They were actually Ciguayos, who were less peaceful than the Tainos.

275 in which there is not a man. The women
engage in no feminine occupation, but use
bows and arrows of cane, like those already
mentioned, and they arm and protect them-
selves with plates of copper, of which they have
280 much.²⁸

In another island, which they assure me is
larger than Española, the people have no hair.²⁹
In it, there is gold incalculable, and from it and
from the other islands, I bring with me Indians
285 as evidence.³⁰

In conclusion, to speak only of that which has
been accomplished on this voyage, which was so
hasty, their highnesses can see that I will give
them as much gold as they may need, if their
290 highnesses will render me very slight assistance;
moreover, spice and cotton, as much as their
highnesses shall command; and mastic,³¹ as much
as they shall order to be shipped and which, up to
now, has been found only in Greece, in the island
295 of Chios,³² and the Seignory³³ sells it for what it
pleases; and aloe wood, as much as they shall
order to be shipped, and slaves, as many as they
shall order to be shipped and who will be from
the idolaters.³⁴ And I believe that I have found
300 rhubarb and cinnamon,³⁵ and I shall find a thou-
sand other things of value, which the people

whom I have left there will have discovered, for
I have not delayed at any point, so far as the wind
allowed me to sail, except in the town of Navidad,
in order to leave it secured and well established, 305
and in truth, I should have done much more, if
the ships had served me, as reason demanded.

This is enough . . . and the eternal God, our
Lord, Who gives to all those who walk in His way
triumph over things which appear to be impos- 310
sible, and this was notably one; for, although men
have talked or have written of these lands, all
was conjectural, without suggestion of ocular
evidence, but amounted only to this, that those
who heard for the most part listened and judged 315
it to be rather a fable than as having any vestige
of truth. So that, since Our Redeemer³⁶ has given
this victory to our most illustrious king and
queen, and to their renowned kingdoms, in so
great a matter, for this all Christendom ought to 320
feel delight and make great feasts and give sol-
emn thanks to the Holy Trinity³⁷ with many sol-
emn prayers for the great exaltation which they
shall have, in the turning of so many people to
our holy faith, and afterwards for temporal 325
benefits,³⁸ for not only Spain but all Christians
will have hence refreshment and gain.

²⁸The same account appears in Columbus's log. Father Ramón Pane, who composed an ethnographic study of Taino culture during Columbus's second voyage of 1493–1494 (see Volume I, Chapter 11, source 98), also related in great detail the legend of the island of Matinino, where only women resided. The story, as reported by Pane, however, contains no hint that they were warlike women. Apparently Columbus took this Taino legend and combined it with the Greco-Roman myth of the warrior Amazons (see Volume I, Chapter 4, source 31). Mandeville wrote of the land of Amazonia, populated totally by warrior women, and Marco Polo described two Asian islands, one inhabited solely by women and another exclusively by men. There is no evidence that this female society reported by Columbus and Pane ever existed in the Caribbean. The Tainos, however, who were essentially a stone-age people, did import from South America an alloy of copper and gold, which they used for ornaments.

²⁹John Mandeville described people with little body hair, and Marco Polo told of Buddhist monks whose heads and faces were shaved.

³⁰Columbus brought seven Tainos back to Spain, where they were baptized, with King Ferdinand and Prince Juan act-

ing as godparents. One remained at the Spanish court, where he died, and the others returned with Columbus on his second voyage of 1493.

³¹Columbus and his men wrongly identified a native gumbo-limbo tree, which contains an aromatic resin, with the rare mastic tree, whose costly resin was a profitable trade item for Genoa (see note 33).

³²An island in the eastern Mediterranean.

³³The ruling body of Genoa, an Italian city-state. Chios was a possession of Genoa, whose merchants controlled the mastic trade.

³⁴Church law forbade the enslavement of Christians, except in the most exceptional circumstances.

³⁵Actually, when members of the crew showed Columbus what they thought were aloe, mastic, and cinnamon, the admiral accepted the aloe and mastic as genuine but rejected the supposed cinnamon. One of his lieutenants reported seeing rhubarb while on a scouting expedition.

³⁶Jesus Christ.

³⁷The Christian belief of three divine persons — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — contained in a single divine essence.

³⁸Benefits that are of this world and last only for a time, as opposed to eternal, or heavenly, rewards.

This in accordance with that which has been accomplished, thus briefly.

330 Done in the caravel,³⁹ off the Canary Islands,

on the fifteenth of February, in the year one thousand four hundred and ninety-three.

At your orders.

El Almirante.⁴⁰

333

³⁹A Spanish ocean-going ship.

⁴⁰The Admiral.

Interpreting Columbus's Letter

Columbus's letter contains a number of interesting facts. For example, the natives Columbus encountered constructed seaworthy canoes and communicated with one another through inter-island travel (lines 181–191). Yet as fascinating and important as such facts are, reading a source with an eye toward garnering tidbits of information is not historical analysis in its fullest sense. *True historical analysis consists of drawing inferential insights from a source and trying to answer, at least in part, the central question of historical study: What does it all mean?* This document allows us to do just that.

Historians use no secret method or magic formula to draw historical insights from their evidence. All they need are attention to detail, thoroughness, common sense, and a willingness to enter imaginatively into the mind of the source's author as fully and honestly as possible, while trying to set aside personal values and perspectives. Anyone who is willing to work at it can profitably interpret primary sources.

The researcher always has to evaluate the worth of each source, which means understanding its point of view and reliability. In this letter several things are obvious. Columbus believed he had reached Asian islands (lines 5–23). Marco Polo, John Mandeville, and other writers had provided a number of reference points by which to recognize the Orient (notes 10, 11, 19, 25, 28, and 29), and Columbus believed he had found many of them. Equally obvious is that Columbus tried to present his discoveries in the best light possible. He sent this letter ahead to the court of Ferdinand and Isabella to ensure that when he arrived he would be received with due honor.

Certainly there is exaggeration, self-puffery, error, and possibly even deliberate distortion in this account. As the introduction to the letter informs us, he overestimated the size of several islands (lines 199–206 and 212–215) and, except for chilies, the spices he claimed to have discovered (lines 89, 291, and 299–300) were not there. The admiral also failed to mention that the *Santa Maria* had been lost. Columbus could not escape informing his royal patrons of this unhappy incident, but presumably he wanted to wait until he was at the court, where he could put his own spin on the facts surrounding the incident. Also not mentioned is a skirmish that he and his men had on January 13, 1493, with some hostile strangers, whom he incorrectly assumed were Caribs (note 27). Perhaps that incident, if reported without explanation, would weaken the admiral's implied claim that Spain could easily subjugate these

timid Indians (lines 97–110 and 232–240). Generally, however, despite Columbus's enthusiasm and understandable tendency to exaggerate, to conveniently neglect to mention anything negative, and to see what he wanted to see, the admiral *seems* to have wanted to present an essentially factual account.

One indication of this is how Columbus described the people of these islands. His reading of popular travel accounts had prepared him to encounter every sort of human monstrosity (note 25), and undoubtedly he would have enjoyed reporting such contacts. But he honestly reported that all the natives he encountered were quite unmonstrous in appearance and temperament (lines 249–252). Of course, he reported stories of people with tails, cannibals, and warlike women who lived apart from men (lines 206–211 and 256–282), but it is unlikely that the admiral was deliberately misleading anyone on this issue. The Carib cannibals were real enough. Rumors of tailed people and latter-day Amazons conceivably were nothing more than the natives trying to please Columbus or simply the result of poor communication. It is not difficult to imagine that the admiral inquired after the locations of the various human curiosities whom Mandeville, Polo, and others had placed in the islands of the Indian Ocean, and the Tainos, not knowing what he was asking, agreeably pointed across the waters to other islands.

In fact, this raises one issue that has long vexed us and which goes straight to the heart of the question of this source's overall reliability. *How well was Columbus able to communicate with these people?* Columbus insisted that through gestures and learned words the Spaniards and Tainos were able to communicate with one another (lines 163–169), and he certainly learned enough of the Tainos' language to report that they called the island on which he initially landed *Guanabani* (line 15). Nevertheless, we suspect that, despite Columbus's use of captive interpreters, only the most primitive forms of communication were possible between the Europeans and the Native Americans in 1492–1493. Therefore, we should have a healthy skepticism about anything that Columbus reports about the Tainos' beliefs and cosmological perspectives (for example, lines 150–156 and 169–176).

Still, all things considered, it seems reasonable to conclude that Columbus's letter can be accepted as a generally honest, if not totally accurate, account of his discoveries and experiences. That basic honesty, compromised to an extent by an understandable enthusiasm to present his accomplishments positively, comes through in his attempt to describe the islands' physical qualities and the people he encountered. The picture that emerges tells us a great deal about the complex motives that underlay his great adventure.

We notice that Columbus had taken possession of the lands in the names of the Spanish monarchs and even renamed the islands, without once giving thought to the claims of anyone else (lines 7–19). He also thought nothing of seizing some natives as soon as he arrived (lines 40–41 and 163–169) and of bringing several Indians back to Spain (lines 284–285). Moreover, he noted toward the end of his letter that the monarchs of Spain could obtain as many *slaves* as they desired from among the islands' *idolaters* (lines 297–299). At the

same time (and this might strike the modern student as curious), Columbus claimed that he had acted generously and protectively toward the native people (lines 111–115 and 127–132), and his letter conveys a tone of admiration and even affection for the people whom he had encountered. Indeed, the admiral expressed a deep interest in winning over the native people of the Indies in an avowed hope that they might become Catholic Christians and loyal subjects of Ferdinand and Isabella (lines 143–150), and he even claimed that they were strongly inclined toward religious conversion (lines 194–198). Yet the very qualities that, as Columbus implied, made the Tainos prime candidates for conversion — intelligence, timidity, naiveté, generosity, ignorance, technological backwardness, lack of an articulated religious creed, an ability to communicate freely among themselves, and a sense of wonder at the Europeans — also made them ripe for subjugation.

The tone of this letter suggests that Columbus was concerned with these people as humans and was genuinely interested in helping them achieve salvation through conversion. It is equally clear, however, that Columbus believed he and Catholic Spain had a right and duty to subjugate and exploit these same people. Such tension continued throughout the Spanish colonial experience in the Americas.

Subjugation of the Indians and their lands involved more than just a sense of divine mission and Christian altruism — as real as those motives were. Columbus, his royal patrons, and most others who joined overseas adventures expected to gain in earthly wealth as well (see especially lines 317–327). Even a superficial reading of his letter reveals the admiral's preoccupation with the riches of the islands — riches that it seems he knowingly exaggerated (note 35). Gold, spices, cotton, aromatic mastic, and, of course, slaves were the material rewards that awaited Christian Europeans, and Columbus was fully interested in them and wanted Ferdinand and Isabella to underwrite future trips so that he could discover them in abundance (lines 286–307). So exaggeration can be found in this account, but it seems to be exaggeration based on conviction.

Was Columbus being cynical, hypocritical, or deliberately ironic when in his closing words he claimed that Jesus Christ had provided this great victory to the Spanish monarchs (and indeed to all Christendom) and from that victory would flow the dual benefits of the conversion of so many people and worldly riches (lines 317–327)? Cynicism, hypocrisy, and conscious irony are not likely explanations. It seems more likely that these closing remarks reveal the mind of a man who saw no contradiction between spreading the faith and benefiting materially from that action, even if doing so meant exploiting the converts.

Please note that in presenting this insight, we have tried to avoid moral judgments. This does not mean that we accept slavery as justifiable or believe it is proper to dispossess people of their lands and cultures. What it does mean is that we are trying to understand Columbus and his world view and not to sit in judgment of a man whose values in some respects were radically different from our own. Passing moral judgment on a distant society's values

and the actions that resulted from them might be emotionally satisfying, but it will not change what has happened. Doing so also could conceivably blind the judge to the historical context in which those actions took place. As suggested earlier, *we study the past in order to gain insight and wisdom regarding the human condition. If that insight is to have any validity whatsoever, it must be based on as dispassionate a study of the evidence as possible.*

Another point merits mention. Perhaps you disagree with our conclusion that Columbus's letter is basically an honest and valuable source, despite its shortcomings. Well, if you do, you are in excellent company. Two eminent historians — William D. Phillips, Jr., and Carla Rahn Phillips, in their book *The Worlds of Christopher Columbus* — characterize this letter as “a tissue of exaggerations, misconceptions, and outright lies.” We obviously disagree in our interpretation of the degree, nature, and extent of the letter's misstatements. No historian is infallible, and certainly we do not claim that distinction. Moreover, no source is so clear in all respects that it lacks areas of potential disagreement for historians. That, in fact, is one of the exciting aspects of historical research. Despite all the facts and conclusions that historians generally agree on, there are numerous areas in which they carry on spirited debate. *The very nature of history's fragmentary, flawed evidence makes debate inevitable.*

What is more, no historian can possibly see everything there is to be seen in every source. What this means, so far as you are concerned, is that *there is plenty of latitude in the sources that appear in this book for you to arrive at valid insights that are unique to you.* In so doing, however, you must at all times attempt to divorce yourself of present-mindedness and to enter imaginatively into the world of the author whose work you are analyzing. You will note that, as is the case with this letter from Columbus, throughout this book we have endeavored to help you do this by means of suggested Questions for Analysis. Use these questions for guidance, but do not be constrained by them. If you find a question inappropriate, misleading, or wrong-headed in its assumptions, feel free to follow your own mind. Just be ready to defend the questions you have chosen to ask along with the conclusions you have reached in answering them.

We can ask many other questions of Columbus's letter and garner other insights from it. Certainly it tells us a lot about Taino culture. Despite his cultural blinders, his naiveté, his tendency to see what he wanted to see, and his probably exaggerated belief in his ability to communicate with these people, Columbus seems to be a reasonably accurate and perceptive observer. Thus anyone interested in Caribbean cultures before the Europeans had much of a chance to influence them must necessarily look to this and similar accounts of first contacts. In fact, it would be good practice for you, right now, to try to answer question 7, which we have deliberately left unanswered. You will be surprised at how much you can learn about the Tainos from this brief description. As you do this exercise, however, do not forget to ask yourself constantly: How reliable does Columbus appear to be on this specific point, and what is the basis for my conclusion?

After you have tested your own powers of historical analysis in this exercise, it would be wise to put the letter aside for the present. We trust that by now you have a good idea of how to examine and mine a documentary source. Now let us consider artifacts.

Unwritten Sources

Historians distinguish between the prehistorical and historical past, with the chief defining feature of any historical culture being that it provides written records from which we can reconstruct its past. Without a large volume and variety of documentary sources, it is impossible to write any society's history in detail. This is not to say that the unwritten relics of the past are worthless. Archeology proves their value, and even historians use such sources. As a rule, however, no matter how extensive a culture's physical remains might be, if it has not left us records we can read, its history largely remains a closed book.

Given the central role documents play in our reconstruction of the past, it should surprise no one to learn that most historians concentrate their research almost exclusively on written sources. Yet historians would be foolish to overlook *any* piece of evidence from the past. As suggested earlier, photographs could be a rich source for anyone researching the history of your class. That future historian might also want to study all of the extant souvenirs and supplies sold in your school's bookstore. Examined properly they could help fill in some gaps in the story of your class's cultural history.

Artifacts can be illuminating, particularly when used in conjunction with written records. Coins can tell us a lot about a society's ideals or its leaders' programs. Art in its many forms can reveal the interests, attitudes, and perceptions of various segments of society, from the elites to the masses. More down-to-earth items, such as domestic utensils and tools, allow us to infer quite a bit about the lives of common individuals. In this book we concentrate largely on written sources, for reasons already outlined. It would be wrong, however, if we totally overlooked artifacts. So, scattered throughout these chapters you will find important pieces of unwritten evidence. Let us look at an example and proceed to interpret it.

The Family Dinner



▼ *AN ANONYMOUS WOODCUT OF 1511*

Columbus arrived in Barcelona in April 1493 to learn not only had his letter arrived, but it had already been published and publicly circulated. Within months the letter was translated into several languages; the Latin translation alone went through nine editions, several of which were lavishly illustrated, before the end of 1494. Printers discovered that educated Europeans had an almost insatiable



desire to learn about the peoples and lands Columbus and other explorers were discovering, and they catered to that interest. Their clientele wanted not only to read about the fascinating peoples, plants, and animals of these lands — they wanted also to see them. Consequently, as books on the new explorations proliferated, so did the number of printed illustrations. Many are fanciful and tell us more about the Europeans who created them than the peoples and regions they supposedly portrayed. The woodcut print we have chosen appeared in a popular English pamphlet of 1511.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. What scene has the artist set? What has the artist placed to the immediate right of the standing man, and what function does it have in this scene?

2. What do each person's actions, dress, and demeanor tell us about her or him?
3. What does this illustration tell us about popular European notions concerning the natives of the New World?

Interpreting the Woodcut

What a charming, even idyllic domestic scene! An attractive mother nurses an infant at her breast while amusing an older child with a feather. A well-muscled, equally attractive, and proud father stands nearby, holding the tools of his trade while next to him the family's dinner is slowly cooking. Dinner, of course, may strike us as macabre, as these are cannibals, and it looks like roast European is on the menu. The tools of the father's trade are weapons. Both children are naked, and the parents are virtually nude, save for what appear to be leaves that cover their loins, decorative necklaces, armbands and anklets of some indeterminate material, and feathers in their long and unkempt hair.

What is the message? What we have is a reprise of the image provided by Columbus in his letter of 1493: the *noble savage*. These are fully human beings with human bonds and affections. Yet they are still savages, as their clothing (or lack of it), decorations, hair styles, weapons, and choice of food would have suggested to most sixteenth-century Europeans. Here, as Columbus and many of those who followed agreed, were a people who could become Christians but who also, by virtue of their backwardness, were to be subjugated. There is something appealing about their innocent savagery, but what of that poor fellow whose severed leg and head are slowly roasting?

Have we read too much into the woodcut? It is arguable that we may have. The historian always faces this problem when trying to analyze an isolated piece of evidence, particularly a nonverbal source. Yet this artifact is not completely isolated, for we brought to its analysis insight gained from documentary evidence — Columbus's letter. That is how we generally read the artifacts of historical cultures. We attempt to place them in the context of what we have already learned or inferred from documentary sources. Documents illuminate artifacts, and artifacts make more vivid and tangible the often shadowy world of words.

As you attempt to interpret the unwritten sources in this book, keep in mind what you have learned from the documents you have already read, your textbook, and class lectures. Remember that we have chosen these artifacts to illustrate broad themes and general trends. You should not find their messages overly subtle. As with the documents, always try to place each piece of nonverbal evidence into its proper context, and in that regard, read the introductions and Questions for Analysis very carefully. We will do our best to provide you with all the information and clues you need.

Good luck and have fun!

Part One



The Ancient World

The term *the Ancient World* presents a problem to the student of global history because it is a creation of Western historical thought. Historians in the West originally used the term to refer only to the early history of one small region of the world — the area that stretches from the northwest corner of the Indian subcontinent to Western Europe. Understood within this narrow context, ancient history involves the period from the rise of civilization in *Southwest Asia* (known today as the *Middle East*) and Egypt to the collapse of Roman civilization: from approximately 3500 Before the Common Era (B.C.E.) to about 500 in the Common Era (C.E.). Within this Western scheme of history, antiquity passed away about fifteen hundred years ago but not before it had laid the roots of Western civilization. Having spent itself, the Ancient World was followed by the so-called *Middle Ages* (500–1500), and this era, in turn, was followed by the early modern (1500–1789), modern (1789–1914), and contemporary eras.

Such neat divisions of the past, which might reflect the Western historical experience (and there is debate over their accuracy even in regard to the history of the West), make little sense when history is studied globally. Nevertheless, the category *the Ancient World* is useful for the global historian if we redefine it in two ways: 1) by expanding the term to include all of the world's *primary*, or earliest, *civilizations*, and 2) by distinguishing between the Afro-Eurasian and American worlds of antiquity.

Ancient civilizations arose independently on two grand *world islands*: the Afro-Eurasian landmass and the Americas. The first to witness this phenomenon was the Afro-Eurasian supercontinent, where primary civilizations appeared in the river valleys of Mesopotamia, Egypt, northwest India, and northern China, between approximately 3500 and 2200 B.C.E.. Although distinct and largely indigenous, these four early centers of civilization influenced one another in varying degrees. Mesopotamia, the world's first known civilization, had early contact with the nascent civilizations of Egypt and India, and by the middle of the second millennium (the 1000s) B.C.E., wheat, barley, and chariots had made their way from Southwest Asia to northern China.

Across the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, unknown to and uninfluenced by the civilizations of Eurasia and Africa, civilizations appeared along the Gulf coast of Mexico around 1200 B.C.E. and, about the same time or shortly thereafter, along the Pacific coast and Andean highlands of Peru. As was the case

in the Afro-Eurasian world island, the civilizations of the Americas cross-fertilized one another through their extensive trade networks but were essentially isolated from the rest of the world. As was also the case in the Afro-Eurasian hemisphere of the globe, the original centers of civilization in the Americas — Mexico and Peru — served as the American hemisphere's dominant matrices of civilized culture for thousands of years and well beyond the period Europeans characterize as *antiquity*.

The original centers of the Afro-Eurasian network of separate but connected civilizations were four fairly self-contained river valleys. Over the course of several thousand years, however, these first civilizations spread outward, each encompassing a large region on which it imprinted a distinctive culture. By 300 B.C.E. the Afro-Eurasian supercontinent had four cultural regions, or pools: Southwest Asia, the Mediterranean, India, and China. Of these, China's relative isolation at the eastern end of the Eurasian landmass dictated that its culture would be the most singular and least stimulated by foreign influences. Conversely, the culture of Southwest Asia — the crossroads of the Afro-Eurasian World — was the most variegated and eclectic.

During the last few centuries B.C.E. and for the first several centuries C.E., the cultures at both ends of the great Eurasian expanse of land, China and the Greco-Roman World, achieved political unity and consequently expanded at the expense of their less organized neighbors, such as Koreans and Southeast Asians in the East and various Celtic peoples in the West. The result was two massive empires linked by Central Asiatic, Indian, Southwest Asian, and East African intermediaries. Consequently, goods, ideas, and diseases were exchanged throughout Eurasia and portions of Africa more freely and quickly than ever before, especially along the fabled Silk Road that ran from China to the Mediterranean.

Between approximately 200 and 550 C.E. internal and external pressures, including diseases that had traveled along the trade routes, precipitated the collapse of empires in China, India, Southwest Asia, and the Roman Mediterranean. With those disasters, which were neither totally contemporaneous nor equally severe, the first grand epoch of Afro-Eurasian history — the Ancient World — was essentially at an end. The era that followed rested on the foundations of antiquity but also differed substantially from the Ancient World, in part because of three world religions — Mahayana Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam — which played transforming roles throughout Eurasia and Africa between roughly 600 and 1500 C.E.

Across the oceans, the civilizations of Mexico and Central and South America continued their development in isolation from the cares and trends of the Eastern Hemisphere. Cities and empires rose and fell, and societies continued to develop along cultural lines set down by the Americas' first civilizations. To be sure, changes took place. One important new trend between roughly 600 and 1200 C.E. was the rise of North American civilizations in what are today the deserts of the southwestern United States and the lands washed by the Mississippi and Ohio rivers. Despite these new centers of civilization, the

Amerindian World was only wrenched out of its ancient patterns when European invaders and colonists began arriving in significant numbers in the early sixteenth century.

Because of a relative lack of documentary evidence relating to preconquest Amerindian cultures and civilizations, the sources in Part One deal almost exclusively with ancient Afro-Eurasian history. We will more fully consider the story of antiquity in the Western Hemisphere in Part Three, Chapter 11.

Chapter 1

The First Civilizations

The word *civilization* derives from the Latin adjective *civilis*, which means “political” or “civic.” No matter how else we define civilization, an organized civic entity, known as a *state*, serves as the core of every society we call civilized. A state is a sovereign public power that binds a multitude of people together at a level that transcends the ties of family, clan, tribe, and local community and organizes them for projects far beyond the capabilities of single families or even villages and towns.

Modern states tend to be *secular*, or oriented toward this world, and most rulers today claim no particular spiritual or religious authority. Indeed, many modern states are based on the principle that legitimate power comes solely from the people. The world’s first states were different, inasmuch as they were all *sacred states*, and their rulers claimed to govern by divine mandate. Such rulers either governed in the name of some divine or heavenly authority or were themselves perceived as gods. Religious beliefs, as well as political and social institutions, varied greatly among the world’s ancient civilizations, but ancient civilized peoples shared a common perception that authority is indivisible, because it is divine. In other words, they saw no distinction between the state’s sacred and secular functions.

Rulers and those who carried out their wills — priests, bureaucrats, and soldiers — were a small minority and maintained power by exploiting the many. This was a fact of early civilized life largely because, until recent times, states could produce only a severely limited surplus of resources due to the narrow agrarian base of their economies. That surplus of goods, which is so necessary for the creation of a state, could only be channeled into state-building activities if rulers kept the majority of their subjects at a fairly low level of subsistence by exacting from them a major portion of the surplus through taxes, labor services, and military conscription. Consequently, the more agreeable benefits of civilization, such as

literature and the other arts, were largely the exclusive property and tools of the few.

Most of the world's first civilizations evolved systems of writing, and in each case the art of writing served, at least initially, to strengthen the authority of rulers. Whether writing was used to record temple possessions or tax obligations, to give permanence to laws, or to provide priests with a coherent body of sacred texts, writing set apart the powerful from the powerless.

Not all of the records left behind by the first civilizations are open to us. Some ancient systems of writing still defy decipherment. Happily, this is not the case with the written languages of Mesopotamia, Egypt, and China. The documentary sources left behind by these three civilizations reveal societies that were strikingly different in perspective and structure, even as they shared characteristics common to all early civilizations.

Mesopotamia: The Land of Two Rivers

According to the eminent historian Samuel N. Kramer, "History begins at Sumer," and there is a good deal of truth to that judgment. It is in *Sumer*, which lay just to the north of the Persian Gulf in an area encompassed by the southern regions of modern Iraq, that we discover the first evidence of human civilization. By 3500 B.C.E. a number of Sumerian city-states had emerged, and humanity was embarked on the adventure of civilization.

Generally we call the Sumerians, and the other peoples who succeeded them in this region of Southwest Asia, *Mesopotamians*. The term, which means "those who dwell between the rivers," acknowledges the origin of the world's first known civilization in the valley created by the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.

By approximately 1800 B.C.E., the Sumerians had been absorbed by waves of infiltrators and invaders and ceased to exist as an identifiable people. Moreover, the cultural center of gravity within Mesopotamia had shifted northward to the region of middle Mesopotamia, centering on the city of Babylon.

Despite their disappearance as a people, the Sumerians had set the framework for a dynamic Mesopotamian civilization that exercised profound cultural influence throughout West Asia and beyond for about three thousand years. Between roughly 3500 and 500 B.C.E. Mesopotamia was where much of the action was, so far as the history of West Asian civilization was concerned.

That action was both constructive and destructive. The Mesopotamians have been credited with having created the world's first governments, schools, codes of law, ethical systems, and epic literature. Just as prominent in Mesopotamian life were disasters, both natural and human generated.

The geography of Mesopotamia provided its people with the challenge of harnessing the waters of its two great rivers, and from that necessary cooperative effort civilization arose. Yet those rivers also threatened to destroy the fragile fabric of civilized society because they were unpredictable and could easily turn into uncontrollable torrents. Moreover, most of southern Mesopotamia was covered by either arid wasteland or marsh. Consequently, Sumerian civilization was built upon heroic labor in the midst of a hostile environment.

Another significant geographical aspect of Mesopotamian life, which also proved to be an important factor throughout its history, is the land's openness to incursions. To the north and east lie the hills and mountains of Iran and Armenia, from which wave after wave of invaders descended into the inviting valley of cities. To the south and west lies the desert of Arabia, out of which came countless nomads century after century. In many instances these invaders toppled a preexisting state and then settled down to become, in turn, Mesopotamians.

Whether they came from the desert fringes, such as the *Amorites*, who established the first Babylonian Empire around 1800 B.C.E., or were mountain folk, such as the chariot-driving *Kassites*, who toppled Babylon soon after 1700, they all eventually became part of a Mesopotamian cultural complex, with modes of life and thought the Sumerians had set in place at the dawn of human civilization.

The Search for Eternal Life in Mesopotamia



1 ▼ THE EPIC OF GILGAMESH

Humans share many basic concerns, and among them two are of primary importance: finding meaning in life and confronting the reality of death. In Mesopotamia, where life and human fortune were so precarious, people deeply probed these issues and made them the subjects of numerous *myths*. The word *myth* derives from the ancient Greek word for “a poetic story.” As understood by modern scholars, however, myths are not just any poetic stories, and they certainly are not deliberate pieces of fiction or stories told primarily to entertain, even though myths do have entertainment value. First and foremost, myths are vehicles through which prescientific societies explain the workings of the universe and humanity's place within it. Whereas the scientist objectifies nature, seeing the world as an *it*, the myth-maker lives in a world where everything has a soul, a personality, and its own story. A raging river is not a body of water responding to physical laws but an angry or capricious god. In the same manner, the fortunes of human society are not the consequences of chance, history, or any patterns discoverable by social scientists. Rather, the gods and other supernatural spirits intervene directly into human affairs, punishing and rewarding as they wish, and divine interventions become the subjects of mythic stories. The stories, in turn, provide insight into the ways of the gods, thereby largely satisfying the emotional and intellectual needs of the myth-maker's audience.

So far as the issues of the meaning of life and death were concerned, ancient Mesopotamia created its classic mythic answer in the form of its greatest work of literature, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. An *epic* is a long narrative poem that celebrates the feats of some legendary hero who is involved in a journey or similar severe test. In the process of his trials, the hero gains wisdom and, because of that wisdom, greater heroic stature.

The most complete extant version of *The Epic of Gilgamesh* was discovered on twelve clay tablets in the ruins of an Assyrian library that dated to the late seventh century B.C.E. Other earlier versions of the epic, however, show that the story, at least in its basic outline, is Sumerian in origin and goes back to the third millennium B.C.E. (2000s).

The hero, Gilgamesh, was a historical figure who ruled the city-state of Uruk sometime between 2700 and 2500 B.C.E. and was remembered as a great warrior, as well as the builder of Uruk's massive walls and temple. His exploits were so impressive that he became the focal point of a series of oral sagas that recounted his legendary heroic deeds. Around 2000 B.C.E. an unknown Babylonian poet reworked some of these tales, along with other stories — such as the adventure of Utnapishtim that appears in our selection — into an epic masterpiece that became widely popular and influential throughout Southwest Asia and beyond.

The epic contains a profound theme, the conflict between humanity's talents and aspirations and its mortal limitations. Gilgamesh, "two-thirds a god and one-third human," as the poem describes him, is a man of heroic proportions and appetites who still must face the inevitability of death.

As the epic opens, an arrogant Gilgamesh, not yet aware of his human limitations and his duties as king, is exhausting the people of Uruk with his manic energy. The people cry to Heaven for relief from his abuse of power, and the gods respond by creating Enkidu, a wild man who lives among the animals. Enkidu enters Uruk, where he challenges Gilgamesh to a contest of strength and fighting skill. When Gilgamesh triumphs, Enkidu embraces him as a brother, and the two heroes set out on a series of spectacular exploits.

In the course of their heroic adventures, they insult Ishtar, goddess of love and fertility, and for this a life is owed. The one chosen by the gods to die is Enkidu. As our selection opens, Enkidu, after having cursed his heroic past, which has brought him to this fate, tells Gilgamesh of a vision he has had of the place Mesopotamians knew as "the land of no return."

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. What was the Mesopotamian view of the afterlife?
2. What is the message of Siduri's advice to Gilgamesh?
3. Consider Utnapishtim's initial response to Gilgamesh's request for the secret of eternal life. How does his message complement what Siduri has said?
4. Consider the story of Utnapishtim. What do the various actions of the gods and goddesses allow us to infer about how the Mesopotamians viewed their deities?

5. According to the epic, what are the respective roles of the gods and humans? What do the Mesopotamian deities require of humanity? What do humans expect of their gods?
6. What wisdom has Gilgamesh gained from his epic struggles? How has he changed as a result of his quest?
7. Despite the apparent failure of his quest for eternal life, has Gilgamesh earned a type of immortality? If so, what is it?
8. Review your answers to questions 2 and 3 in light of the epilogue, where the poet lays out for us the moral of the story. Basing your answer on the entire story, and especially the epilogue, what would you say was the Mesopotamian view of the meaning of life?

As Enkidu slept alone in his sickness, in bitterness of spirit he poured out his heart to his friend. "It was I who cut down the cedar, I who leveled the forest, I who slew Humbaba¹ and now see what has become of me. Listen, my friend, this is the dream I dreamed last night. The heavens roared, and earth rumbled back an answer; between them stood I before an awful being, the sombre-faced manbird; he had directed on me his purpose. His was a vampire face, his foot was a lion's foot, his hand was an eagle's talon. He fell on me and his claws were in my hair, he held me fast and I smothered; then he transformed me so that my arms became wings covered with feathers. He turned his stare towards me, and he led me away to the palace of Irkalla, the Queen of Darkness,² to the house from which none who enters ever returns, down the road from which there is no coming back.

"There is the house whose people sit in darkness; dust is their food and clay their meat. They are clothed like birds with wings for covering, they see no light, they sit in darkness. I entered the house of dust and I saw the kings of the earth, their crowns put away forever; rulers and princes, all those who once wore kingly crowns and ruled the world in the days of old. They who had stood in the place of the gods like Anu and Enlil,³ stood now like servants to

fetch baked meats in the house of dust, to carry cooked meat and cold water from the waterskin. In the house of dust which I entered were high priests and acolytes, priests of the incantation and of ecstasy; there were servers of the temple, and there was Etana, that king of Kish whom the eagle carried to heaven in the days of old.⁴ There was Ereshkigal⁵ the Queen of the Underworld; and Belit-Sheri squatted in front of her, she who is recorder of the gods and keeps the book of death. She held a tablet from which she read. She raised her head, she saw me and spoke: 'Who has brought this one here?' Then I awoke like a man drained of blood who wanders alone in a waste of rushes; like one whom the bailiff has seized and his heart pounds with terror."

▷ Enkidu dies, and Gilgamesh now realizes that heroic fame is no substitute for life. Facing the reality of his own death, he begins a desperate search for immortality. In the course of his search he meets Siduri, a goddess of wine, who advises him:

"Gilgamesh, where are you hurrying to? You will never find that life for which you are looking. When the gods created man they allotted to him death, but life they retained in their own keeping. As for you, Gilgamesh, fill your belly

¹The giant who guarded the cedar forest and was slain by Enkidu and Gilgamesh.

²Goddess of the Underworld.

³Dead earthly kings. Anu was the supreme king of the gods

and the source of all order and government; Enlil was the storm god, who supported royal authority.

⁴A legendary king of the Sumerian city of Kish.

⁵Another name for Irkalla, goddess of the Underworld.

with good things; day and night, night and day, dance and be merry, feast and rejoice. Let your clothes be fresh, bathe yourself in water, cherish the little child that holds your hand, and make your wife happy in your embrace; for this too is the lot of man."

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- ▷ Gilgamesh, however, refuses to be deflected from his quest. After a series of harrowing experiences, he finally reaches Utnapishtim, a former mortal whom the gods had placed in an eternal paradise, and addresses him.
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"Oh, father Utnapishtim, you who have entered the assembly of the gods, I wish to question you concerning the living and the dead, how shall I find the life for which I am searching?"

Utnapishtim said, "There is no permanence. Do we build a house to stand forever, do we seal a contract to hold for all time? Do brothers divide an inheritance to keep forever, does the flood-time of rivers endure? It is only the nymph of the dragon-fly who sheds her larva and sees the sun in his glory. From the days of old there is no permanence. The sleeping and the dead, how alike they are, they are like a painted death. What is there between the master and the servant when both have fulfilled their doom? When the Anunnaki,⁶ the judges, come together, and Mammethun⁷ the mother of destinies, together they decree the fates of men. Life and death they allot but the day of death they do not disclose."

Then Gilgamesh said to Utnapishtim the Far-away, "I look at you now, Utnapishtim, and your appearance is no different from mine; there is nothing strange in your features. I thought I should find you like a hero prepared for battle, but you lie here taking your ease on your back. Tell me truly, how was it that you came to enter the company of the gods and to possess everlasting life?" Utnapishtim said to Gilgamesh, "I will

reveal to you a mystery, I will tell you a secret of the gods."

"You know the city Shurruapak, it stands on the banks of Euphrates? That city grew old and the gods that were in it were old. There was Anu, lord of the firmament, their father, and warrior Enlil their counselor, Ninurta⁸ the helper, and Ennugi⁹ watcher over canals; and with them also was Ea.¹⁰ In those days the world teemed, the people multiplied, the world bellowed like a wild bull, and the great god was aroused by the clamor. Enlil heard the clamor and he said to the gods in council, 'The uproar of mankind is intolerable and sleep is no longer possible by reason of the babel.' So the gods agreed to exterminate mankind. Enlil did this, but Ea because of his oath¹¹ warned me in a dream. He whispered their words to my house of reeds, 'Reed-house, reed-house! Wall, O wall, hearken reed-house, wall reflect; O man of Shurruapak, son of Ubara-Tutu; tear down your house and build a boat, abandon possessions and look for life, despise worldly goods and save your soul alive. Tear down your house, I say, and build a boat. . . . Then take up into the boat the seed of all living creatures.'

"When I had understood I said to my lord, 'Behold, what you have commanded I will honor and perform, but how shall I answer the people, the city, the elders?' Then Ea opened his mouth and said to me, his servant, 'Tell them this: I have learnt that Enlil is wrathful against me, I dare no longer walk in his land nor live in his city; I will go down to the Gulf to dwell with Ea my lord. But on you he will rain down abundance, rare fish and shy wildfowl, a rich harvest-tide. In the evening the rider of the storm will bring you wheat in torrents.' . . .

"On the seventh day the boat was complete. . . .

"I loaded into her all that I had of gold and of living things, my family, my kin, the beast of the field both wild and tame, and all the crafts-

⁶Gods of the Underworld who judge the dead.

⁷Goddess of fate.

⁸God of war.

⁹God of irrigation.

¹⁰God of wisdom and providence.

¹¹Apparently an oath to protect humanity, because Ea was the god of life-giving water and good fortune.

men. I sent them on board. . . . The time was fulfilled, the evening came, the rider of the storm sent down the rain. I looked out at the weather and it was terrible, so I too boarded the boat and battened her down. . . .

"For six days and six nights the winds blew, torrent and tempest and flood overwhelmed the world, tempest and flood raged together like warring hosts. When the seventh day dawned the storm from the south subsided, the sea grew calm, the flood was stilled; I looked at the face of the world and there was silence, all mankind was turned to clay. The surface of the sea stretched as flat as a roof-top; I opened a hatch and the light fell on my face. Then I bowed low, I sat down and I wept, the tears streamed down my face, for on every side was the waste of water. I looked for land in vain, but fourteen leagues distant there appeared a mountain, and there the boat grounded; on the mountain of Nisir the boat held fast, she held fast and did not budge. . . . When the seventh day dawned I loosed a dove and let her go. She flew away, but finding no resting-place she returned. Then I loosed a swallow, and she flew away but finding no resting-place she returned. I loosed a raven, she saw that the waters had retreated, she ate, she flew around, she cawed, and she did not come back. Then I threw everything open to the four winds, I made a sacrifice and poured out a libation¹² on the mountain top. Seven and again seven cauldrons I set up on their stands, I heaped up wood and cane and cedar and myrtle. When the gods smelled the sweet savor, they gathered like flies over the sacrifice.¹³ Then, at last, Ishtar also came, she lifted her necklace with the jewels of heaven that once Anu had made to please her. 'O you gods here present, by the lapis lazuli round my neck I shall remember these days as I remember the jewels of my throat; these last days I shall not forget.'¹⁴ Let all the gods gather round the sacrifice, except Enlil. He shall not approach this

offering, for without reflection he brought the flood; he consigned my people to destruction.'

"When Enlil had come, when he saw the boat, he was wrath and swelled with anger at the gods, the host of heaven, 'Has any of these mortals escaped? Not one was to have survived the destruction.' Then the god of the wells and canals Ninurta opened his mouth and said to the warrior Enlil, 'Who is there of the gods that can devise without Ea? It is Ea alone who knows all things.' Then Ea opened his mouth and spoke to warrior Enlil, 'Wisest of gods, hero Enlil, how could you so senselessly bring down the flood?' . . . It was not that I revealed the secret of the gods; the wise man learned it in a dream. Now take your counsel what shall be done with him.

"Then Enlil went up into the boat, he took me by the hand and my wife and made us enter the boat and kneel down on either side, he standing between us. He touched our foreheads to bless us saying, 'In time past Utnapishtim was a mortal man; henceforth he and his wife shall live in the distance at the mouth of the rivers.' Thus it was that the gods took me and placed me here to live in the distance, at the mouth of the rivers."

Utnapishtim said, "As for you, Gilgamesh, who will assemble the gods for your sake, so that you may find that life for which you are searching?"

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- ▷ After telling his story, Utnapishtim challenges Gilgamesh to resist sleep for six days and seven nights. When Gilgamesh fails the test, Utnapishtim points out how preposterous it is to search for immortality when one cannot even resist sleep. Out of kindness, Utnapishtim does tell Gilgamesh where he can find a submarine plant that will at least rejuvenate him. Consequently, the hero dives to the bottom of the sea and plucks it. However, humanity is to be denied even the blessing of forestalling old age and decrepitude, because the plant is stolen from Gilgamesh by a serpent. His mission a failure, Gilgamesh returns to Uruk.
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¹²Poured out wine or some other beverage as an offering to the gods.

¹³Many myth-making people believe that the gods gain nourishment from the greasy smoke of burnt sacrifices.

¹⁴The necklace is a rainbow.

The destiny was fulfilled which the father of the gods, Enlil of the mountain, had decreed for Gilgamesh: "In nether-earth the darkness will show him a light: of mankind, all that are known, none will leave a monument for generations to come to compare with his. The heroes, the wise men, like the new moon have their waxing and waning. Men will say, 'Who has ever ruled with might and with power like him?' As in the dark month, the month of shadows, so without him there is no light. O Gilgamesh, this was the meaning of your dream. You were given the kingship, such was your destiny, everlasting life was not your destiny. Because of this do not be sad at heart, do not be grieved or oppressed; he has given you power to bind and to loose, to be the

darkness and the light of mankind. He has given unexampled supremacy over the people, victory in battle from which no fugitive returns, in forays and assaults from which there is no going back. But do not abuse this power, deal justly with your servants in the palace, deal justly before the face of the Sun." . . .

Gilgamesh, the son of Ninsun, lies in the tomb. At the place of offerings he weighed the bread-offering, at the place of libation he poured out the wine. In those days the lord Gilgamesh departed, the son of Ninsun, the king, peerless, without an equal among men, who did not neglect Enlil his master. O Gilgamesh, lord of Kullab,¹⁵ great is thy praise.

¹⁵Part of Uruk.

Bringing Order to an Uncertain World



2 ▼ THE JUDGMENTS OF HAMMURABI

Mesopotamia's characteristic sense of insecurity resulted in its producing not only great philosophical literature but also detailed legal codes. The so-called *Code of Hammurabi* is the most famous but certainly not the earliest of the many collections of law produced throughout the first three thousand years of Mesopotamian civilization. Discovered in 1901, this Babylonian text from the eighteenth century B.C.E. is inscribed on a stone pillar (technically known as a *stèle*) that measures over seven feet in height and more than six feet in circumference. Apparently Hammurabi wanted it to last forever.

Whether Mesopotamia's numerous compilations of law were Sumerian, Babylonian, Assyrian, or Chaldean, a number of common elements united them. Chief among them was the expressed purpose, as the prologue to Hammurabi's collection declares, "to promote the welfare of the people . . . to cause justice to prevail in the land, to destroy the wicked and the evil, that the strong might not oppress the weak." There is good reason to believe that even conquerors such as Hammurabi (reigned ca. 1792–1750 B.C.E.), who briefly united Mesopotamia and transformed Babylon into the capital of an empire, sought to promote justice through law.

Hammurabi's code is actually not a coherent and systematic code of laws but rather a compilation of decisions, or *misbarum* (equity rulings), that the king made in response to specific cases and perceived injustices. Nevertheless, this collection of judgments covers a wide variety of crimes and circumstances, thereby

allowing extensive insight into the structure and values of eighteenth-century Babylonian society.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. What specific actions did Hammurabi take in his attempt to provide for the good order of society and the basic welfare of his subjects?
2. What evidence is there of class distinctions in Babylon?
3. What was the status of women in this society? Did they enjoy any protection or liberties?
4. What about children? What was their status? Did they enjoy any protection or liberties?
5. Mesopotamian society has been characterized as a *patriarchal* (dominated by male heads of households) society. Does the evidence in this collection of decisions tend to support or refute that judgment?
6. What seem to have been the principles and assumptions that underlay these judgments? In other words, what does this collection reveal about the world view, basic values, and ideals of Hammurabi's Babylon?

PROLOGUE

When Marduk¹ had instituted me governor of men, to conduct and to direct, Right and Justice I established in the land, for the good of the people.

THE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

3. If in a lawsuit a man gives damning evidence, and his word that he has spoken is not justified, then, if the suit be a capital one,² that man shall be slain. . . .
5. If a judge has heard a case, and given a decision, and delivered a written verdict, and if afterward his case is disproved, and that judge is convicted as the cause of the misjudgment, then he shall pay twelve times the penalty awarded in that case. In public assembly he shall be thrown from the seat of judgment; he shall not return;

and he shall not sit with the judges upon a case. . . .

FELONS AND VICTIMS

22. If a man has perpetrated brigandage, and has been caught, that man shall be slain.
23. If the brigand has not been taken, the man plundered shall claim before god³ what he has lost; and the city and governor in whose land and boundary the theft has taken place shall restore to him all that he has lost.
24. If a life, the city and governor shall pay one mina⁴ of silver to his people.⁵ . . .

PROPERTY

29. If his son is under age, and unable to administer his [deceased] father's affairs, then a third part of the field and garden

¹The chief god of Babylon.

²A case in which death is the penalty.

³The god or goddess of the city. Each city had its special protector deity.

⁴About five hundred grams of silver. A mina was divided into sixty shekels.

⁵The family of the slain person.

shall be given to his mother, and his mother shall bring him up. . . .

38. A captain, soldier, or official may not give his field, or garden, or house to his wife or his daughter; neither can they be given as payment for debt.⁶
39. He may bequeath in writing to his wife or daughter a field, a garden, or a house that he may have bought, and may give it as payment for debt. . . .

WINESELLERS AND TAVERNS

109. If rebels meet in the house of a wineseller and she⁷ does not seize them and take them to the palace, that wine-seller shall be slain.
110. If a priestess who has not remained in the temple,⁸ shall open a wine-shop, or enter a wine-shop for drink, that woman shall be burned. . . .

DEBT SLAVERY

117. If a man has contracted a debt, and has given his wife, his son, his daughter for silver or for labor, three years they shall serve in the house of their purchaser or bondsmaster; in the fourth year they shall regain their original condition. . . .

MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY

129. If the wife of a man is found lying with another male, they shall be bound and thrown into the water. If the husband lets his wife live, then the king shall let his servant⁹ live. . . .
134. If a man has been taken prisoner, and there is no food in his house, and his wife en-

ters the house of another, then that woman bears no blame.

135. If a man has been taken prisoner, and there is no food before her, and his wife has entered the house of another, and bears children, and afterward her husband returns and regains his city, then that woman shall return to her spouse. The children shall follow their father.
136. If a man has abandoned his city, and absconded, and after that his wife has entered the house of another, if that man comes back and claims his wife, because he had fled and deserted his city, the wife of the deserter shall not return to her husband.
137. If a man has decided to divorce . . . a wife who has presented him with children, then he shall give back to that woman her dowry,¹⁰ and he shall give her the use of field, garden, and property, and she shall bring up her children. After she has brought up her children, she shall take a son's portion of all that is given to her children, and she may marry the husband of her heart.
138. If a man divorces his spouse who has not borne him children, he shall give to her all the silver of the bride-price,¹¹ and restore to her the dowry which she brought from the house of her father; and so he shall divorce her.
139. If there was no bride-price, he shall give her one mina of silver for the divorce.
140. If he is a peasant, he shall give her one-third of a mina of silver.
141. If a man's wife, dwelling in his house, has decided to leave, has been guilty of dissipation, has wasted her house, and has neglected her husband, then she shall be

⁶The monarch retained ultimate ownership of the property handed out to soldiers and bureaucrats who received land as payment for their services.

⁷Women traditionally filled this role in ancient Mesopotamia, perhaps because the wine deity was the goddess Siduri (see source 1).

⁸Thereby breaking her vow to devote her life to serving the temple deity.

⁹The wife's lover.

¹⁰The required money or goods she brought to the marriage.

¹¹The price he paid her family in order to marry her.

prosecuted. If her husband says she is divorced, he shall let her go her way; he shall give her nothing for divorce. If her husband says she is not divorced, her husband may marry another woman, and that [first] woman shall remain a slave in the house of her husband.

142. If a woman hates her husband, and says "You shall not possess me," the reason for her dislike shall be inquired into. If she is careful, and has no fault, but her husband takes himself away and neglects her, then that woman is not to blame. She shall take her dowry and go back to her father's house. . . .
148. If a man has married a wife, and sickness has seized her, and he has decided to marry another, he may marry; but his wife whom the sickness has seized he shall not divorce. She shall dwell in the house he has built, and he shall support her while she lives. . . .
168. If a man has decided to disinherit his son, and has said to the judge, "I disown my son," then the judge shall look into his reasons. If the son has not been guilty of a serious offense which would justify his being disinherited, then the father shall not disown him.
169. If the son has committed a serious offense against his father which justifies his being disinherited, still the judge shall overlook this first offense. If the son commits a grave offense a second time, his father may disown him. . . .

PERSONAL INJURY

195. If a son has struck his father, his hands shall be cut off.
196. If a man has destroyed the eye of another free man, his own eye shall be destroyed.
197. If he has broken the bone of a free man, his bone shall be broken.
198. If he has destroyed the eye of a peasant, or broken a bone of a peasant, he shall pay one mina of silver.
199. If he has destroyed the eye of a man's slave, or broken a bone of a man's slave, he shall pay half his value.
200. If a man has knocked out the teeth of a man of the same rank, his own teeth shall be knocked out.
201. If he has knocked out the teeth of a peasant, he shall pay one-third of a mina of silver.
202. If a man strikes the body of a man who is superior in status, he shall publicly receive sixty lashes with a cowhide whip. . . .
206. If a man has struck another man in a dispute and wounded him, that man shall swear, "I did not strike him knowingly"; and he shall pay for the physician.
207. If he dies of his blows, he shall swear likewise; and if it is the son of a free man, he shall pay half a mina of silver.
208. If he is the son of a peasant, he shall pay a third of a mina of silver.
209. If a man strikes the daughter of a free man, and causes her fetus to abort, he shall pay ten shekels of silver for her fetus.
210. If that woman dies, his daughter shall be slain.
211. If he has caused the daughter of a peasant to let her fetus abort through blows, he shall pay five shekels of silver.
212. If that woman dies, he shall pay half a mina of silver. . . .

CONSUMER PROTECTION

215. If a physician has treated a man with a metal knife for a severe wound, and has cured the man, or has opened a man's tumor with a metal knife, and cured a man's eye, then he shall receive ten shekels of silver.
216. If the son of a peasant, he shall receive five shekels of silver. . . .
218. If a physician has treated a man with a metal knife for a severe wound, and has caused the man to die, or has opened a man's tumor with a metal knife, and

destroyed the man's eye, his hands shall be cut off. . . .

229. If a builder has built a house for a man, and his work is not strong, and if the house he has built falls in and kills the householder, that builder shall be slain.
230. If the child of the householder is killed, the child of that builder shall be slain.
231. If the slave of the householder is killed, he shall give slave for slave to the householder.
232. If goods have been destroyed, he shall replace all that has been destroyed; and because the house that he built was not made strong, and it has fallen in, he shall restore the fallen house out of his own personal property.
233. If a builder has built a house for a man, and his work is not done properly, and a wall shifts, then that builder shall make that wall good with his own silver. . . .

EPILOGUE

The oppressed, who has a lawsuit, shall come before my image as king of justice. He shall read the writing on my pillar, he shall perceive my precious words. The word of my pillar shall explain to him his cause, and he shall find his right.

¹²The sun-god, god of justice, and vindicator of the oppressed. During the eighteenth century B.C.E. he rose in prominence among the deities of Babylon. The sculpture that is carved at the top of the stele on which Hammurabi's

His heart shall be glad [and he shall say,] "The Lord Hammurabi has risen up as a true father to his people; the will of Marduk, his god, he has made to be feared; he has achieved victory for Marduk above and below. He has rejoiced the heart of Marduk, his lord, and gladdened the flesh of his people for ever. And the land he has placed in order." . . .

In after days and for all time, the king who is in the land shall observe the words of justice which are written upon my pillar. He shall not alter the law of the land which I have formulated, or the statutes of the country that I have enacted. . . . If that man has wisdom, and desires to keep his land in order, he will heed the words which are written upon my pillar. . . . The . . . people he shall govern; their laws he shall pronounce, their statutes he shall decide. He shall root out of the land the perverse and the wicked; and the flesh of his people he shall delight.

Hammurabi, the king of justice, am I, to whom Shamash¹² has granted rectitude. My words are well weighed: my deeds have no equal, leveling the exalted, humbling the proud, expelling the haughty. If that man heeds my words that I have engraved upon my pillar, departs not from the laws, alters not my words, changes not my sculptures, then may Shamash make the scepter of that man to endure as long as I, the king of justice, and to lead his people with justice.

judgments are inscribed shows the king humbly receiving from Shamash a measuring-line and a rod, the symbols of equity and justice.

Egypt: The River of Two Lands

Civilization seems to have arisen in Egypt shortly after it first appeared in Sumer. Although there is evidence of early Sumerian contact with the Egyptians, Egypt's civilization was largely self-generated, and its history and cultural patterns differed substantially from those of Mesopotamia. Egyptians, however, shared the same myth-making way of perceiving reality.

An integral element of Egyptian myth was the belief that Egypt was the land of divine harmony ruled by a living god-king, or *pharaoh*, who balanced all conflict-

ing cosmic forces. Around 3100 B.C.E. the land of the Nile was unified into a single state, although culturally it remained two distinctive lands: the rich delta region of the north, known as *Lower Egypt* (because the Nile flows northward), and the long but narrow strip of green land that borders the Nile to the south, known as *Upper Egypt*. Before their unification, Lower and Upper Egypt had been separate kingdoms. As far as Egyptians were concerned, they forever remained two antithetical yet complementary lands that were brought into harmony by a unifying king who was a god on Earth. As the embodiment of the union of Upper and Lower Egypt, the king was likewise the personification on Earth of the goddess *Ma'at*, whose name in a general sense meant "what is right." In other words, the god-king of Egypt *was* truth, law, and justice.

The state that resulted from the union of Egypt's two lands enjoyed about three thousand years of unparalleled prosperity and stability. Between approximately 3100 and 343 B.C.E. Egypt experienced only a handful of relatively short-lived periods of either major internal turmoil and the consequent breakdown of central authority or domination by foreign powers. This long history of centralized monarchy and native rule was due in large part to the blessings of geography. Egypt was fairly secure behind its barriers of sea and desert, and the Nile's annual flooding was predictable and beneficial.

The sense of security that followed from these geographical and historical circumstances was reflected in the life-affirming spirit that was evident in much of Egyptian religion and philosophy. It also left its imprint on Egypt's arts. Whether painting charming scenes of everyday activities or composing tender love poems, Egyptian artists celebrated the joys of life. At the same time, codes of law, which figure so prominently in the historical records of Mesopotamia, are not to be found in the literature of ancient Egypt. Though the Egyptians were equally concerned with maintaining a well-ordered society, their avenue to this goal differed greatly from that of the Mesopotamians.

The Search for Eternal Life in Egypt



3 ▼ THREE FUNERARY TEXTS

Historians have traditionally divided the first two thousand years of Egyptian civilization into six ages: the Early Dynastic Period (ca. 3100–2600 B.C.E.); the Old Kingdom (ca. 2600–2125); the First Intermediate Period (ca. 2125–2025); the Middle Kingdom (ca. 2060–1700); the Second Intermediate Period, or Age of the Hyksos (ca. 1700–1550); and the New Kingdom, or Empire (ca. 1550–1069).

The Early Dynastic Period was Egypt's era of initial unification and state-building under the guidance of its first three royal dynasties. The Old Kingdom that followed centered on Egypt's god-kings, whose mummified remains were reverently entombed in pyramids in preparation for the journey to eternal life in the *Land of the West*. During this age, Egyptians believed (or at least the priests taught) that immortality was the exclusive preserve of the divine pharaoh, members of the royal family, the priests, and a handful of favored royal servants. They further

believed that in order to ensure the king's safe journey to the afterlife, all that was needed was proper attention to the many details of the royal funeral ceremony. Beginning with the entombment of King Unas, who died around 2345 B.C.E., Egyptians carved magical incantations on the walls of royal burial chambers as a means of assuring the king's safe journey into eternal life. Modern scholars have discovered and catalogued over 750 distinct incantations, which they term collectively the *Pyramid Texts*. We do not know what the Egyptians called them, but regardless, they provide a privileged view of funeral practices and beliefs regarding immortality during the Old Kingdom. Our first selection comes from the tomb of King Teti, who followed Unas to the throne.

Egyptians continued to bury their dead with great ceremony for thousands of years, but it was essentially only during the Old Kingdom that they constructed the great burial pyramids, which for over forty-five hundred years have served as tokens of the power wielded by early Egypt's god-kings. The reign of Pepi II (ca. 2275–2185 B.C.E.) marked the end of the Old Kingdom. Shortly after Pepi's death, pharaonic power collapsed, plunging Egypt into an era of internal turmoil known as the First Intermediate Period. A century later this age of local rule and social upheaval gave way to the Middle Kingdom, an era of revived central authority and a deepening awareness of social justice and personal moral responsibility. Befitting the new spirit, many Egyptians came to view eternal life as available to all Egyptians who met certain criteria.

A new body of funerary inscriptions now appeared, which scholars today refer to as the *Coffin Texts*. The texts, usually inscribed within the wooden coffins of people who could afford elaborate funerals, were ritual resurrection spells. Some were modeled upon the earlier *Pyramid Texts*, but most were quite new and displayed an obsession with the dangers of Earth and the terrors of death that was lacking in the pyramid inscriptions. Despite the essential life-affirming nature of their culture, Egyptians were not immune to the miseries and fears, especially fear of disaster and death, that beset all humans.

Our second selection is a much-used coffin spell that takes the form of a two-part speech. In the first part the sun-god *Re* speaks, reminding humanity of his four good deeds at the time of creation. In the second part the deceased speaks, laying his claim on eternal life.

The process of widening access to the afterlife evolved to another level with the creation of *The Book of the Dead*. This is actually the modern name for a collection of papyrus texts that the Egyptians knew as *The Chapters for Coming Forth by Day*. Although it did not reach its final form until around the sixth century B.C.E., this collection of chapters was largely a creation of the New Kingdom. Like the pyramid and coffin inscriptions from which it evolved, it was a body of magical incantations for use in burial ceremonies, but unlike the pyramid and coffin inscriptions, it had a fairly standardized text. It was also available to a larger but still necessarily prosperous clientele. Divided into more than 150 chapters, which were gathered together into papyrus scrolls, the book had a certain mass-produced quality. One could purchase a scroll, fill in the name of the deceased, and bury it with the person's body. Resurrection had become a cut-rate enterprise.

Of all the chapters, the most famous is Chapter 125, the lengthy “Judgment of the Dead,” from which we have extracted *The Negative Confession*. The scene is the Hall of the Two Truths, or the Double Ma’at, where *Osiris*, king of the Underworld, presides over an assembly of forty-two minor deities. It is these forty-two who judge the deceased’s suitability to become an eternally blessed spirit. Upon entering the hall, the deceased (N, or fill in the name) proclaims her or his purity.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. What are the underlying assumptions of King Teti’s pyramid text?
2. According to the coffin text, how does a person guarantee eternal life?
3. Consider the speech of Re. Does it contain a moral element? If so, how is that message connected, if at all, with the dead person’s spell?
4. One scholar has written of the coffin texts: “Because the individuals who were seeking an afterlife as divine beings stood outside of the royal circle, their coffin inscriptions reflected both paranoid fear and delusions of grandeur.” Do you agree or disagree?
5. What does *The Negative Confession* allow us to infer about Egyptian values in the New Kingdom?
6. Each of the three texts provides a path to eternal life. What do their similarities and differences suggest about continuities and changes within Egyptian society over this millennium?
7. Compare these three texts with *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. What are their different messages? What do those messages suggest about the differences between the two civilizations?

A PYRAMID TEXT

Oho! Oho! Rise up, O Teti!
 Take your head,
 Collect your bones,
 Gather your limbs,
 Shake the earth from your flesh!
 Take your bread that rots not,
 Your beer that sours not,
 Stand at the gates that bar the
 common people!
 The gatekeeper comes out to you,
 He grasps your hand,
 Takes you into heaven, to your father Geb.¹

He rejoices at your coming,
 Gives you his hands,
 Kisses you, caresses you,
 Sets you before the spirits, the
 imperishable stars.
 The hidden ones worship you,
 The great ones surround you,
 The watchers wait on you.
 Barley is threshed for you,
 Emmen is reaped for you,
 Your monthly feasts are made with it,
 Your half-month feasts are made with it,
 As ordered done for you by Geb, your father,
 Rise up, O Teti, you shall not die!

¹The god of the Earth and father of Osiris, the god of resurrection and king of the dead.

A COFFIN TEXT

Words spoken by Him-whose-names-are-hidden, the All-Lord, as he speaks before those who silence the storm, in the sailing of the court:²

Hail in peace! I repeat to you the good deeds which my own heart did for me from within the serpent-coil,³ in order to silence strife. I did four good deeds within the portal of lightland:

I made the four winds, that every man might breathe in his time. This is one of the deeds.

I made the great inundation,⁴ that the humble might benefit by it like the great. This is one of the deeds.

I made every man like his fellow; and I did not command that they do wrong. It is their hearts that disobey what I have said. This is one of the deeds.

I made that their hearts are not disposed to forget the West,⁵ in order that sacred offerings be made to the gods of the nomes.⁶ This is one of the deeds.

I have created the gods from my sweat, and the people from the tears of my eye.

The Dead Speaks

I⁷ shall shine and be seen every day as a dignitary of the All-Lord, having given satisfaction to the Weary-hearted.⁸

I shall sail rightly in my bark,⁹ I am lord of eternity in the crossing of the sky.

I am not afraid in my limbs, for Hu and Hike¹⁰ overthrow for me that evil being.

I shall see lightland, I shall dwell in it. I shall judge the poor and the wealthy.

I shall do the same for the evil-doers; for mine is life, I am its lord, and the scepter will not be taken from me.

I have spent a million years with the Weary-hearted, the son of Geb, dwelling with him in one place; while hills became towns and towns hills, for dwelling destroys dwelling.

I am lord of the flame who lives on truth; lord of eternity, maker of joy, against whom that worm shall not rebel.

I am he who is in his shrine, master of action who destroys the storm; who drives off the serpents of many names when he goes from his shrine.

Lord of the winds who announces the north-wind, rich in names in the mouth of the Ennead.¹¹

Lord of lightland, maker of light, who lights the sky with his beauty.

I am he in his name! Make way for me, that I may see Nun¹² and Amun!¹³ For I am that equipped spirit who passes by the guards.¹⁴ They do not speak for fear of Him-whose-name-is-hidden, who is in my body. I know him, I do not ignore him! I am equipped and effective in opening his portal!

As for any person who knows this spell, he will be like Re in the eastern sky, like Osiris in the netherworld. He will go down to the circle of fire, without the flame touching him ever!

²The deities who accompany Re as he sails daily across the sky (note 9).

³The serpent-dragon Apophis, a mythic symbol of the lurking dangers in the world.

⁴The annual flooding of the Nile.

⁵The Land of the Resurrected Dead.

⁶The forty-two religious and administrative districts into which Egypt was divided. Note that the dead person is being judged by forty-two deities.

⁷The dead person now becomes the speaker, assuming the identity of Re.

⁸One of Osiris's titles. One must first satisfy Osiris before joining Re.

⁹Re sails across the sky in a bark, or boat.

¹⁰Personifications of effective speech and magic, they are probably a reference to this magical spell, which has been uttered at entombment and carved in the coffin.

¹¹The company of Egypt's nine chief deities.

¹²The watery void outside the temporal and spatial boundaries of creation from which the creator emerged, Nun was personified as the god of the Abyss.

¹³A primeval god who existed as a force before creation, he became the chief god of Thebes. He rose to preeminence in Egypt when the princes of Thebes reunited Egypt after the Second Intermediate Period (see source 4, note 1).

¹⁴The guards to the Land of the West.

THE NEGATIVE CONFESSION

(1) To be said on reaching the Hall of the Two Truths¹⁵ so as to purge N of any sins committed and to see the face of every god:

Hail to you, Great God, Lord of the
Two Truths!

I have come to you, my Lord,
I was brought to see your beauty.
I know you, I know the names of the forty-
two gods,

Who are with you in the Hall of the
Two Truths.

Who live by warding off evildoers,
Who drink of their blood,
On that day of judging characters
before Wennofer.¹⁶

Lo, your name is "He-of-Two-Daughters,"
(And) "He-of-Ma'at's-Two-Eyes."

Lo, I come before you,
Bringing Ma'at to you,
Having repelled evil for you.

I have not done crimes against people,
I have not mistreated cattle,
I have not sinned in the Place of Truth.¹⁷
I have not known what should not
be known,¹⁸

I have not done any harm.
I did not begin a day by exacting more than
my due,

My name did not reach the bark of the
mighty ruler.¹⁹

I have not blasphemed a god,
I have not robbed the poor.
I have not done what the god abhors,
I have not maligned a servant to his master.
I have not caused pain,

I have not caused tears.
I have not killed,
I have not ordered to kill,
I have not made anyone suffer.
I have not damaged the offerings in
the temples,
I have not depleted the loaves of the gods,
I have not stolen the cakes of the dead.²⁰
I have not copulated nor defiled myself.
I have not increased nor reduced
the measure, . . .

I have not cheated in the fields.
I have not added to the weight of
the balance,
I have not falsified the plummet of
the scales.
I have not taken milk from the mouth
of children,
I have not deprived cattle of their pasture.
I have not snared birds in the reeds of
the gods,
I have not caught fish in their ponds.
I have not held back water in its season,
I have not dammed a flowing stream,
I have not quenched a needed fire.
I have not neglected the days of
meat offerings,
I have not detained cattle belonging to
the god,
I have not stopped a god in his procession.

I am pure, I am pure,
I am pure, I am pure! . . .
No evil shall befall me in this land,
In this Hall of the Two Truths;
For I know the names of the gods in it,
The followers of the great God!

¹⁵Ma'at takes a dual form here in Isis, goddess of right, and Nephthys, goddess of truth. Isis was the sister and wife of Osiris. It was she who brought the dead and dismembered Osiris back to life, thereby assuring his status as god of resurrection and king of the Underworld. Nephthys, also Osiris's sister, had assisted in his resurrection.

¹⁶One of Osiris's names.

¹⁷He has not sinned in any holy place.

¹⁸Secrets of the gods.

¹⁹As he sails across the sky in his bark, Re has not heard of any misdeeds by the deceased.

²⁰Food to accompany the dead on their journey.

Making a Living in Ancient Egypt



4 ▼ A SCRIBAL EXERCISE BOOK

We would be greatly mistaken if we viewed the ancient Egyptians as so preoccupied with death and the afterlife that they had little concern with the affairs of this world. The literature and art of Egypt provide many glimpses into everyday life, and one of the best in this regard is a large body of exercise pieces for student scribes that compare the scribe's profession to other ways of making a living. Needless to say, scribes believed that all crafts were inferior to their own, and given their privileged status, they were probably correct. Despite its blatant prejudice in favor of the scribe's way of life, this description of the wretchedness of nonscribal activities gives a good overview of the types of employment in which Egyptians were engaged. Examples of this genre go back at least to the Middle Kingdom; our selection dates from the twelfth century B.C.E. in the age of the late New Kingdom.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. According to the teacher, what attributes do all nonscribal trades share?
2. Most of Egypt's peasants were free. Taking the obvious exaggeration into account, what does this text suggest about the lives of these peasants?
3. The New Kingdom was an era of empire and foreign military adventure. What does this text tell us about the soldiers who bore the brunt of Egypt's imperial ambitions?
4. What are the presumed advantages of the scribe's profession?
5. Does this seem to be a fair picture of the dichotomy that existed in ancient society between the literate and the illiterate?
6. How would you characterize the economy of Egypt as revealed in this text?

The idle scribe is worthless

The royal scribe and chief overseer of the cattle of Amun-Re,¹ King of Gods, Nebmare-nakht, speaks to the scribe Wenemdiamun, as follows. You are busy coming and going, and don't think of writing. You resist listening to me; you neglect my teachings.

You are worse than the goose of the shore, that is busy with mischief. It spends the summer destroying the dates, the winter destroying the seed-grain. It spends the balance of

the year in pursuit of the cultivators. It does not let seed be cast to the ground without snatching it in its fall. One cannot catch it by snaring. One does not offer it in the temple. The evil, sharpeyed bird that does no work!

You are worse than the desert antelope that lives by running. It spends no day in plowing. Never at all does it tread on the threshing-floor. It lives on the oxen's labor, without entering among them. But though I spend the day tell-

¹The composite chief deity of the New Kingdom, Amun-Re was a result of the joining of Amun, chief god of Thebes

(source 3, note 13), with Re, the chief deity of the Old and Middle kingdoms.

ing you "Write," it seems like a plague to you. Writing is very pleasant!

All occupations are bad except that of the scribe

See for yourself with your own eye. The occupations lie before you.

The washerman's day is going up, going down. All his limbs are weak, [from] whitening his neighbors' clothes every day, from washing their linen.

The maker of pots is smeared with soil, like one whose relations have died. His hands, his feet are full of clay; he is like one who lives in the bog.

The cobbler mingles with vats.² His odor is penetrating. His hands are red with madder,³ like one who is smeared with blood. . . .

The watchman⁴ prepares garlands and polishes vase-stands. He spends a night of toil just as one on whom the sun shines.

The merchant travels downstream and upstream. They are as busy as can be, carrying goods from one town to another. They supply him who has wants. But the tax collectors carry off the gold, that most precious of metals.

The ships' crews from every house [of commerce], they receive their loads. They depart from Egypt for Syria, and each man's god is with him. [But] not one of them says: "We shall see Egypt again!"

The carpenter who is in the shipyard carries the timber and stacks it. If he gives today the output of yesterday, woe to his limbs! The shipwright stands behind him to tell him evil things.

His outworker who is in the fields, his is the toughest of all the jobs. He spends the day loaded with his tools, tied to his tool-box. When he returns home at night, he is loaded with the tool-box and the timbers, his drinking mug, and his whetstones.

The scribe, he alone, records the output of all of them. Take note of it!

The misfortunes of the peasant

Let me also expound to you the situation of the peasant, that other tough occupation. [Comes] the inundation and soaks him — — —,⁵ he attends to his equipment. By day he cuts his farming tools; by night he twists rope. Even his midday hour he spends on farm labor. He equips himself to go to the field as if he were a warrior. The dried field lies before him; he goes out to get his team. When he has been after the herdsman for many days, he gets his team and comes back with it. He makes for it a place in the field. Comes dawn, he goes to make a start and does not find it in its place. He spends three days searching for it; he finds it in the bog. He finds no hides on them; the jackals have chewed them. He comes out, his garments in his hand, to beg for himself a team.

When he reaches his field he finds [it] broken up. He spends time cultivating, and the snake is after him. It finishes off the seed as it is cast to the ground. He does not see a green blade. He does three plowings with borrowed grain. His wife has gone down to the merchants and found nothing for barter. Now the scribe lands on the shore. He surveys the harvest. Attendants are behind him with staffs, Nubians⁶ with clubs. One says [to him]: "Give grain." "There is none." He is beaten savagely. He is bound, thrown in the well, submerged head down. His wife is bound in his presence. His children are in fetters. His neighbors abandon them and flee. When it's over, there's no grain.

If you have any sense, be a scribe. If you have learned about the peasant, you will not be able to be one. Take note of it!

Be a scribe

The scribe of the army and commander⁷ of the cattle of the house of Amun, Nebmare-nakht, speaks to the scribe Wenemdiamun, as follows. Be a scribe! Your body will be sleek; your hand

²For tanning leather.

³A red plant dye.

⁴The watchman-custodian of a temple, who prepares for the next day's rituals.

⁵There is a gap in the document here.

⁶Mercenaries from the land south of Egypt (source 9).

⁷A joke whereby the scribe Nebmare-nakht, who holds the post of overseer of the cattle of the god Amun-Re, now takes the military title of *commander*.

will be soft. You will not flicker like a flame, like one whose body is feeble. For there is not the bone of a man in you. You are tall and thin. If you lifted a load to carry it, you would stagger, your legs would tremble. You are lacking in strength; you are weak in all your limbs; you are poor in body.

Set your sight on being a scribe; a fine profession that suits you. You call for one; a thousand answer you. You stride freely on the road. You will not be like a hired ox. You are in front of others.

I spend the day instructing you. You do not listen! Your heart is like an [empty] room. My teachings are not in it. Take their [meaning] to yourself!

The marsh thicket is before you each day, as a nestling is after its mother. You follow the path of pleasure; you make friends with revellers. You have made your home in the brewery, as one who thirsts for beer. You sit in the parlor with an idler. You hold the writings in contempt. You visit the whore. Do not do these things! What are they for? They are of no use. Take note of it!

The scribe does not suffer like the soldier

Furthermore. Look, I instruct you to make you sound; to make you hold the palette freely. To make you become one whom the king trusts; to make you gain entrance to treasury and granary. To make you receive the ship-load at the gate of the granary. To make you issue the offerings on feast days. You are dressed in fine clothes; you own horses. Your boat is on the river; you are supplied with attendants. You stride about inspecting. A mansion is built in your town. You have a powerful office, given you by the king. Male and female slaves are about you. Those who are in the fields grasp your hand, on plots that you have made. Look, I make you into a staff of life! Put the writings in your heart, and you will be protected from all kinds of toil. You will become a worthy official.

Do you not recall the [fate of] the unskilled man? His name is not known. He is ever bur-

dened [like an ass carrying] in front of the scribe who knows what he is about.

Come, [let me tell] you the woes of the soldier, and how many are his superiors: the general, the troop-commander, the officer who leads, the standard-bearer, the lieutenant, the scribe, the commander of fifty, and the garrison-captain. They go in and out in the halls of the palace, saying: "Get laborers!" He is awakened at any hour. One is after him as [after] a donkey. He toils until the Aten⁸ sets in his darkness of night. He is hungry, his belly hurts; he is dead while yet alive. When he receives the grain-ration, having been released from duty, it is not good for grinding.

He is called up for Syria. He may not rest. There are no clothes, no sandals. The weapons of war are assembled at the fortress of Sile. His march is uphill through mountains. He drinks water every third day; it is smelly and tastes of salt. His body is ravaged by illness. The enemy comes, surrounds him with missiles, and life recedes from him. He is told: "Quick, forward, valiant soldier! Win for yourself a good name!" He does not know what he is about. His body is weak, his legs fail him. When victory is won, the captives are handed over to his majesty, to be taken to Egypt. The foreign woman faints on the march; she hangs herself [on] the soldier's neck. His knapsack drops, another grabs it while he is burdened with the woman. His wife and children are in their village; he dies and does not reach it. If he comes out alive, he is worn out from marching. Be he at large, be he detained, the soldier suffers. If he leaps and joins the deserters, all his people are imprisoned. He dies on the edge of the desert, and there is none to perpetuate his name. He suffers in death as in life. A big sack is brought for him; he does not know his resting place.

Be a scribe, and be spared from soldiering! You call and one says: "Here I am." You are safe from torments. Every man seeks to raise himself up. Take note of it!

⁸The divine sun disk.

China: The Land of the Yellow River

The study of history has been one of China's most revered and continuous traditions for well over two thousand years. Already by the second century B.C.E. the Chinese confidently claimed a detailed history that reached back into the early third millennium. According to their vision of the past, Chinese civilization was sparked not by the actions of gods but by extraordinary men, beginning with the *Three Sovereigns*, who laid the basis of Chinese culture by bestowing such gifts as agriculture and fire. The last of the three was the *Yellow Emperor*, who established an organized state around 2700 B.C.E. Four other emperors succeeded in turn, each of whom ascended the throne by virtue of merit and genius rather than by birth. Known as the *Five Sage Emperors*, they crafted all of the basic elements of Chinese civilization. The last of these five predynastic geniuses was succeeded onto the throne by his son, thereby establishing China's first royal dynasty — the *Xia* family, which ruled from 2205 to 1766 B.C.E. After the collapse of the Xia Dynasty, the *Shang* Dynasty held power, until it gave way to the *Zhou* Dynasty.

Until the late 1920s we had no irrefutable evidence that either the Xia or Shang dynasties ever existed, and Western historians generally dismissed them as romantic legends. The work of archeologists over the past sixty years, however, has proved beyond any shadow of a doubt that the Shang Era was a historical reality. Dating it precisely, however, has proved to be a problem due to the ambiguity of the archeological record. Many scholars have dated its origins to the eighteenth century B.C.E.; other historians have placed it no earlier than around 1600 B.C.E. Locating Xia's time and place has proved to be even more difficult, but recent excavations strongly suggest that the Xia Dynasty also existed, probably as early as 2200 or 2100 B.C.E. The picture of earliest Chinese civilization remains cloudy and controversial at best, but recent archeological evidence suggests strongly that Xia, Shang, and Zhou were originally three coexisting centers of civilization in North China, and the Shang and Zhou successions were largely the shifting of dominance through warfare from one state and family of royal warlords to another. It appears that as early as the late third millennium B.C.E., northern China was home to many competing small states, each centered on a clan and its walled town. Warfare and alliances allowed some of these states to grow at their neighbors' expense and others to lose their independence. Apparently none of these families or their states ever totally dominated northern China until the victory of the Qin state in 221 B.C.E. (see Chapter 4), but certain families, namely Xia, Shang, and Zhou, successively claimed wide-sweeping royal hegemony. That noted, it is important to understand that the details of early Chinese history still largely elude us. Most of the stories related by Sima Qian and other classical Chinese historians about the predynastic Sage Emperors and China's first royal dynasties still seem to most modern historians to be more the stuff of legend than historical fact. But who knows what tomorrow's archeological discovery will bring?

Our knowledge of the Xia state and its age of predominance is sketchy at best. We know much more about the Shang, thanks to the work of archeologists who have unearthed magnificent bronze ceremonial vessels, two huge capital cities, and a primitive form of Chinese ideographic writing on what are known as *oracle bones*. Although scholars can read them, the oracle bones provide little detail about the social and political history of the Shang because they served only one purpose: magical divination of the future.

China's earliest extant literary and political documents date from the age of Zhou rule, and thus we know much more about the Zhou Dynasty than about the Xia and Shang. Even so, Zhou's date of origin remains a subject for debate. (All Chinese dates before 800 B.C.E. are quite imprecise.) The era of Zhou rule *seems* to have begun around 1100 when the Zhou conquered the Shang and established a royal dynasty that lasted eight hundred years or more. The Zhou Era is divided into two periods: Western and Eastern. The age of Western Zhou witnessed a fairly strong but decentralized monarchy that presided over fifty or more subordinate states. What this means is that the Zhou kings delegated authority to the rulers of these states in elaborate ceremonies that emphasized the king's primacy. As time went on, however, power tended to slip away from the Western Zhou kings into the hands of local lords. In 771 B.C.E. a group of rebellious northern nobles killed King Yu and overran the capital city, Xi'an, and the royal heir fled eastward to Luoyang. Here the Zhou continued to reside as kings until 256 B.C.E., but the kings of Eastern Zhou never enjoyed the power of their western forebearers. For five hundred years they reigned over, but did not rule, a kingdom where all real power resided in the smaller regional states and the families that controlled them.

The Mandate of Heaven



5 ▼ THE CLASSIC OF HISTORY

The *Shu Jing*, or *The Classic of History*, is the oldest complete work among what are known as the five Confucian Classics. (The introduction to source 24 in Chapter 4 contains a biography of Confucius, and note 6 of source 35 in Chapter 5 describes the Classics.) The five Classics were canonized as the basic elements of the Confucian educational system during the second century B.C.E., when the books were reconstructed by order of several emperors of the Han Dynasty (202 B.C.E.–220 C.E.). Although Han scholars probably refashioned elements of the *Shu Jing*, the work was already ancient in Confucius' day, and the book, as we have received it, is probably essentially the same text that Confucius (?551–479? B.C.E.) knew, studied, and accepted as an authentic record of Chinese civilization.

Despite its title, *The Classic of History* is not a work of historical interpretation or narration. Rather, it is a collection of documents spanning some seventeen hundred years of Chinese history and legend, from 2357 to 631 B.C.E. Many of the documents, however, are the spurious creations of much later periods and therefore reflect the attitudes of those subsequent eras.

The document that appears here was composed in the age of Zhou but purports to be the advice given by the faithful Yi Yin to King Tai Jia, second of the Shang kings. According to the story behind the document, when the first Shang king, Zheng Tang, died around 1753, his chief minister Yi Yin took it upon himself to instruct the new, young king in the ways and duties of kingship and the workings of the *Mandate of Heaven*.

The Mandate of Heaven was a political-social philosophy that served as the basic Chinese explanation for the success and failure of monarchs and states down to the end of the empire in 1912 C.E. Whenever a dynasty fell, the reason invariably offered by China's sages was that it had lost the moral right to rule, which is given by Heaven alone. In this context, Heaven did not mean a personal god but a cosmic, all-pervading power. The theory of the Mandate of Heaven was probably created by the Zhou and used to justify their overthrow of the Shang. The king, after all, was the father of his people, and paternal authority was the basic cement of Chinese society from earliest times. Rebellion against a father, therefore, needed extraordinary justification.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. What virtues and values does this document extol?
2. How does a monarch lose the Mandate of Heaven, and what are the consequences of this loss?
3. What evidence can you find to support the conclusion that Chinese political philosophers perceived the state as an extended family?
4. Would Yi Yin accept the notion that one must distinguish between a ruler's private morality and public policies?
5. What does the theory of the Mandate of Heaven suggest about the nature of Chinese society?
6. Modern politicians often promise "innovative answers to the challenges of tomorrow." What would Yi Yin think about such an approach to statecraft? What would Yi Yin think about modern politicians who attempt to appear youthful? What would he think of popular opinion polls?
7. Compare the Chinese vision of its ideal monarch with Egyptian and Mesopotamian views of kingship. Despite their obvious cultural differences, did each of these societies expect its king to perform essentially the same task? If so, what was that task?

In the twelfth month of the first year . . . Yi Yin sacrificed to the former king, and presented the heir-king reverently before the shrine of his grandfather. All the princes from the domain of the nobles and the royal domain were present;

all the officers also, each continuing to discharge his particular duties, were there to receive the orders of the chief minister. Yi Yin then clearly described the complete virtue of the Meritorious Ancestor¹ for the instruction of the young king.

¹Zheng Tang, founder of the Shang Dynasty.

He said, "Oh! of old the former kings of Xia cultivated earnestly their virtue, and then there were no calamities from Heaven. The spirits of the hills and rivers likewise were all in tranquility; and the birds and beasts, the fishes and tortoises, all enjoyed their existence according to their nature. But their descendant did not follow their example, and great Heaven sent down calamities, employing the agency of our ruler² who was in possession of its favoring appointment. The attack on Xia may be traced to the orgies in Ming Tiao.³ . . . Our king of Shang brilliantly displayed his sagely prowess; for oppression he substituted his generous gentleness; and the millions of the people gave him their hearts. Now your Majesty is entering on the inheritance of his virtue; — all depends on how you commence your reign. To set up love, it is for you to love your relations; to set up respect, it is for you to respect your elders. The commencement is in the family and the state. . . .

"Oh! the former king began with careful attention to the bonds that hold men together. He listened to expostulation, and did not seek to resist it; he conformed to the wisdom of the ancients; occupying the highest position, he displayed intelligence; occupying an inferior position, he displayed his loyalty; he allowed the good qualities of the men whom he employed and did not seek that they should have every talent. . . .

"He extensively sought out wise men, who

should be helpful to you, his descendant and heir. He laid down the punishments for officers, and warned those who were in authority, saying, 'If you dare to have constant dancing in your palaces, and drunken singing in your chambers, — that is called the fashion of sorcerers; if you dare to set your hearts on wealth and women, and abandon yourselves to wandering about or to the chase, — that is called the fashion of extravagance; if you dare to despise sage words, to resist the loyal and upright, to put far from you the aged and virtuous, and to seek the company of . . . youths, — that is called the fashion of disorder. Now if a high noble or officer be addicted to one of these three fashions with their ten evil ways, his family will surely come to ruin; if the prince of a country be so addicted, his state will surely come to ruin. The minister who does not try to correct such vices in the sovereign shall be punished with branding.' . . .

"Oh! do you, who now succeed to the throne, revere these warnings in your person. Think of them! — sacred counsels of vast importance, admirable words forcibly set forth! The ways of Heaven are not invariable: — on the good-doer it sends down all blessings, and on the evil-doer it sends down all miseries. Do you but be virtuous, be it in small things or in large, and the myriad regions will have cause for rejoicing. If you not be virtuous, be it in large things or in small, it will bring the ruin of your ancestral temple."

²Zheng Tang (see note 1).

³According to legend, Jie, the last Xia king, held notorious orgies at Ming Tiao.

Zhou Viewed from Above and Below



6 ▼ THE CLASSIC OF ODES

The *Shih Jing*, or *The Classic of Odes*, is another of the five Confucian Classics that served as the basic texts of an educational system that molded China's leaders for more than two thousand years. The work consists of 305 poetic songs, covering a variety of topics from love to war; their dates of composition largely fall into the period of about 900 to 600 B.C.E. The book ultimately became Confucian by virtue

of the fact that Confucius and his many generations of disciples used the songs as texts for moral instruction. No good reason exists to believe that Confucius actually had a hand in crafting any of the poems or even in assembling the collection.

The following three ballads show us the Western Zhou regime as viewed both by those who were part of it and those who served it. The first poem celebrates the virtues of Zhong Shan Fu, ninth-century chief minister to King Xuan. A careful reading of the song reveals not only the Zhou Dynasty's vision of itself but also its philosophy of what constituted good government and personal virtue. Although the great lords of Western Zhou believed their rule was virtuous and their wars glorious, that was not necessarily the view from other quarters. Our second song is the commentary of a person from the East on the ways of these western lords. The third poem could be the lament of any rank-and-file soldier in virtually any army at any time in recorded history.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. The first four lines of the first poem neatly sum up the classical Chinese self-image. What was it?
2. According to this poem, what is good government, and how does one achieve it?
3. What is the meaning of the proverb, "Inward power is light as a feather; yet too heavy for common people to raise"? What does it tell us about China's political-social philosophy?
4. Compare the philosophy that undergirds the first poem with our selection from *The Classic of History* (source 5). What conclusions do you reach?
5. In the second poem the author compares the lords of Western Zhou to certain heavenly constellations. What message does the poet intend to convey through this image?
6. What dichotomy has this poet drawn between the people of Zhou and the people of the East whom they have conquered?
7. According to the third poet, what aspects of life has soldiering disrupted?
8. Compose a reply by the author of the first poem to the second and third poems. A prose answer is sufficient.

1. THE IDEAL MINISTER

The people of our race were created by Heaven
Having from the beginning distinctions¹ and
rules.

Our people cling to customs,
And what they admire is seemly behavior.
Heaven, looking upon the land of Zhou,

Sent a radiance to earth beneath.
To guard this Son of Heaven²
It created Zhong Shan Fu.

In his nature Zhong Shan Fu
Is a pattern of mildness and blessedness.
Good is his every attitude and air,
So cautious, so composed!

¹Distinctions between persons with regard to their status and relationship with one another. For example, the distinc-

tion between ruler and subject or between husband and wife.
²The king.

Following none but ancient teachings,
Striving only for dignity and good
deportment,
Obedient to the Son of Heaven,
Whose glorious commands he spreads abroad.

The kind commanded Zhung Shan Fu:
"Be a pattern to all the officers of Court,
Continue the work of your ancestors,
Protect the royal person,
Go out and in with the royal commands,
Be the king's throat and tongue,
Spread his edicts abroad
That through all the land men may be stirred."

With due awe of the king's command
Did Zhung Shan Fu effect it.
If in the land anything was darkened
Zhung Shan Fu shed light upon it.
Very clear-sighted was he and wise.
He assured his own safety,³
But day and night never slackened
In the service of the One Man.⁴

There is a saying among men:
"If soft, chew it;
If hard, spit it out."
But Zhung Shan Fu
Neither chews the soft,
Nor spits out the hard;
He neither oppresses the solitary⁵ and the
widow,
Nor fears the truculent and strong.

There is a saying among men:
"Inward power is light as a feather;
Yet too heavy for common people to raise."
Thinking it over,
I find none but Zhung Shan Fu that could
raise it;
For alas! none helped him.

When the robe of state was in holes
It was he alone who mended it.

2. THE MEN OF ZHOU

Messy is the stew in the pot;
Bent is the thornwood spoon.
But the ways of Zhou are smooth as a grind-
stone,
Their straightness is like an arrow;
Ways that are for gentlemen to walk
And for commoners to behold.
Full of longing I look for them;
In a flood my tears flow.

In the Lesser East and the Greater East⁶
Shuttle and spool are idle.
"Fibre-shoes tightly woven
Are good for walking upon the dew."⁷
Foppishly mincing the young lords
Walk there upon the road.
They go away, they come back again;
It makes me ill to look at them!

That spraying fountain so cold
Does not soak firewood that is gathered and
bundled.
Heigh-ho! I lie awake and sigh.
Woe is me that am all alone!
Firewood that is gathered firewood
May still be put away.
Woe is me that am all alone!⁸
I too could do with rest.

The men of the East, their sons
Get all the work and none of the pay.
The men of the West, their sons,
Oh, so smart are their clothes!
The men of Zhou, their sons
Wear furs of bearskin, black and brown.
The sons of their vassals⁹
For every appointment are chosen.

³By pleasing his ancestors, he escaped the wrath of their spirits.

⁴The king.

⁵The person without family.

⁶West of the coastal province of Shandong and central Shandong, respectively.

⁷That is, the shoes of a dandy.

⁸Without family.

⁹The lords who are the political and military subordinates of Zhou.

Fancy taking the wine
And leaving the sauce,
Having a belt-pendant so fine
And not using its full length!

In Heaven there is a River Han¹⁰
Looking down upon us so bright.
By it sits the Weaving Lady¹¹ astride her stool,
Seven times a day she rolls up her sleeves.
But though seven times she rolls her sleeves
She never makes wrap or skirt.
Bright shines that Draught Ox,¹²
But can't be used for yoking to a cart.

3. THE COMMON SOLDIER

What plant is not faded?
What day do we not march?

What man is not taken
To defend the four bounds?¹³

What plant is not wilting?
What man is not taken from his wife?
Alas for us soldiers,
Treated as though we were not fellowmen!

Are we buffaloes, are we tigers
That our home should be these desolate wilds?
Alas for us soldiers,
Neither by day nor night can we rest!

The fox bumps and drags
Through the tall, thick grass.
Inch by inch move our barrows
As we push them along the track.

¹⁰The Milky Way.

¹¹A heavenly constellation.

¹²Another constellation.

¹³The frontiers.

Mute Testimony

Some of the world's earliest civilizations have left written records that we cannot yet decipher and might never be able to read. These include India's *Harappan* civilization, which was centered in the Indus valley from around 2600 to about 1700 B.C.E.; the *Minoan* civilization of the Aegean island of Crete, which flourished from roughly 2500 to about 1400 B.C.E.; and the African civilization of *Kush*, located directly south of Egypt, which reached its age of greatness after 800 B.C.E. but with much earlier origins as a state. For many other early civilizations and cultures we have as yet uncovered no written records. This is the case of the mysterious peoples who, between approximately 6000 B.C.E. and the first century C.E., painted and carved thousands of pieces of art on the rocks of *Tassili n' Ajjer* in what is today the central Sahara Desert. It is also true of the *Olmec* civilization of Mexico, which appeared around 1200 B.C.E.

The following pieces of artifactual evidence provide glimpses into these often forgotten cultures. As is always the case when dealing with unwritten sources, however, the historian discovers that such clues from the past raise more questions than they answer.

Bringing in the Sheaves



7 ▼ A TASSILI ROCK PAINTING

Tassili n' Ajjer is today a desiccated, largely uninhabited plateau deep in the heart of southern Algeria's Sahara Desert. Its name, however, which translates as "plateau of the rivers," suggests a past quite different from its present condition. Before the Sahara crept into the region about two thousand years ago, Tassili n' Ajjer was a lush area that supported a wide variety of animal species and human cultures. The latter left behind a rich artistic record of over six thousand years of human habitation on the plateau.

In 1956 an expedition of French scholars studied and copied more than four thousand rock paintings at Tassili and an equally impressive number of rock carvings. This art reflects four major cultural stages of the peoples who lived there. The earliest examples of rock paintings reach back to before 6000 B.C.E. and were the products of a preagricultural, gatherer-hunter society. The rock art produced between about 5000 and 1200 B.C.E. was the work of a pastoral people whose cattle figure prominently in their paintings. Around 1200 B.C.E. the horse



Tassili Rock Painting: Grain Harvesters

and chariot appear in Tassili's rock art, evidence of a significant new equine technology due to influences from the Mediterranean. Finally, as the desert was expanding, the domesticated single-humped Arabian camel appears on the faces of these rocks, signifying yet another and now final stage of cultural development for the terminally endangered people of this area.

The painting that appears here is generally interpreted as portraying a group of people harvesting wild grains. It might date anywhere from 4000 to 1500 B.C.E.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. What appears to be the sex of the seven harvesters and the person in the lower right who seems to be going to the field?
2. Consider the person at the upper left of the painting. What does he/she seem to be doing? What appears to be the person's sex?
3. What do your answers suggest about gender roles in this society?

Cultural Impressions



8 ▼ *INDUS, MESOPOTAMIAN, AND CRETAN SEALS*

The stamps and seals that grace the many documents certifying who we are and what we have attained have their origins in the carved magic amulets of prehistory. As official signatures and tokens of authority, seals and stamps have been used by individuals and states since the dawn of civilization. In Mesopotamia carved stone cylinder seals that were rolled into soft clay were used at Uruk and other Sumerian cities as early as 3500 B.C.E. and continued to be produced in large numbers throughout Southwest Asia for the next three thousand years. When papyrus and parchment replaced clay as preferred writing surfaces, stamps and stamp seals replaced cylinder seals in popularity.

Ancient Southwest Asians did not have a monopoly on the use of such marks of ownership, authenticity, and official approval. More than two thousand stamp seals and seal impressions have been discovered at Harappan sites in the Indus valley of what is today the nation of Pakistan. Collectively, the seals contain some four hundred different characters of what appears to be a pictographic form of writing. However, scholars have, as yet, been unable to crack the code represented by these signs. Happily, the seals contain more than undecipherable words; they contain carved images that allow us to infer something about this largely mysterious civilization.

Our first grouping contains six modern drawings (done in negative for clarity) of Indus seal impressions from the period 2100–1750 B.C.E., the age of Harappan cultural maturity. Seal 1 depicts a hairy person holding two tigers by the throat. Seal 2 portrays a horned, tailed, and cloven-footed individual grappling with a horned tiger under a tree. Seal 3 depicts two unicorn (single-horned) heads twisted

around what appears to be a stylized *pipal*, or fig, tree, the sacred tree of India. Seal 4 shows four human figures somersaulting forward and backward over the raised horns of a bull. Seal 5 shows a humped bull, often called a Brahman bull. Seal 6 presents a male individual with a deeply furrowed or painted face who is wearing a water-buffalo-horn headdress, numerous bangles, bracelets, and a V-shaped collar or necklace. The individual is sitting with his knees angled to either side and the soles of his feet pressed together in front of him. His arms extend away from his body and his hands rest on his knees, with fingers pointed downward. Surrounding him are wild animals: a rhinoceros and water buffalo to his left; an elephant and tiger to his right; underneath him are two antelope-like creatures (one is largely broken off; only its horns remain). A stick-figure human



1



4



2



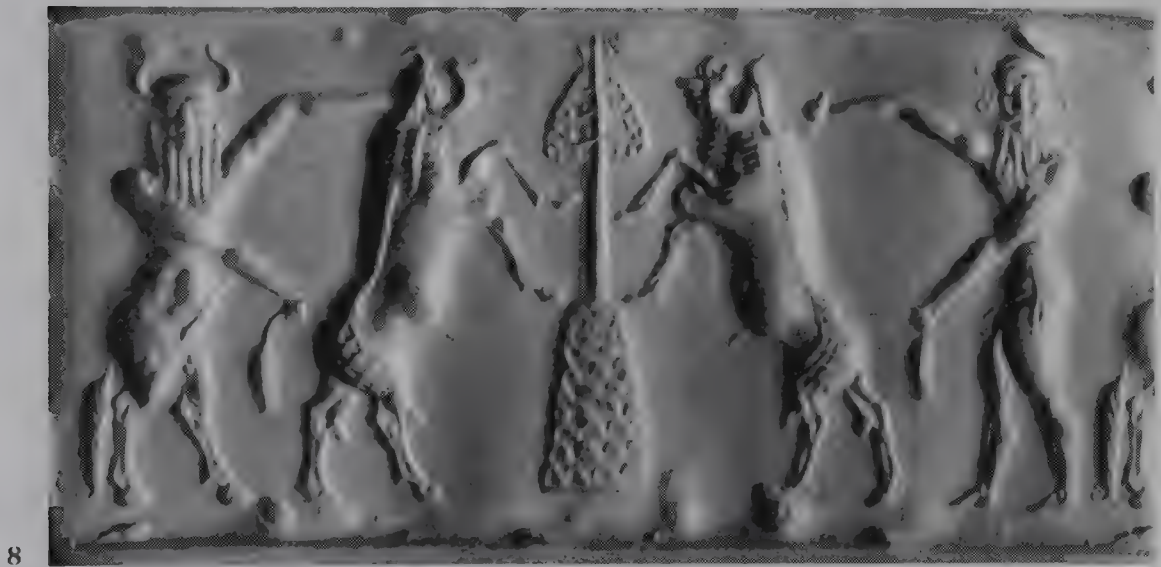
5



3



6



Mesopotamian Seals



Cretan Seal

also stands or walks to his right. Some viewers see two side faces in this seated figure.

For reasons of comparison, consider the second group of three seal impressions. Items 7 and 8 are rolled-out impressions from Mesopotamian cylinder seals. Number 7, which is from Sumer and dates to somewhere between 2600 and 2350 B.C.E., depicts two heroes struggling with animals. On our left is a nude, muscular, hairy man fighting two bulls. This is probably Gilgamesh (source 1). On the right is a creature who is half bull and half human grasping two lions. This is probably Gilgamesh's companion Enkidu. Number 8 was crafted in Akkad in central Mesopotamia in the period 2340–2180 B.C.E. and shows a bull-man on the left and a hairy hero on the right (probably Enkidu and Gilgamesh). Each holds a rampant bull by the mane and tale. The forelegs of each bull touch the top of a stylized mountain and what seems to be a sacred tree on the mountain. The final impression (9) is of a seal from the island civilization of Crete. The seal dates to ca. 1550–1500 B.C.E. and depicts two bulls and two acrobats. One athlete has just vaulted over a bull, while the second bull-leaper stands ready to vault.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

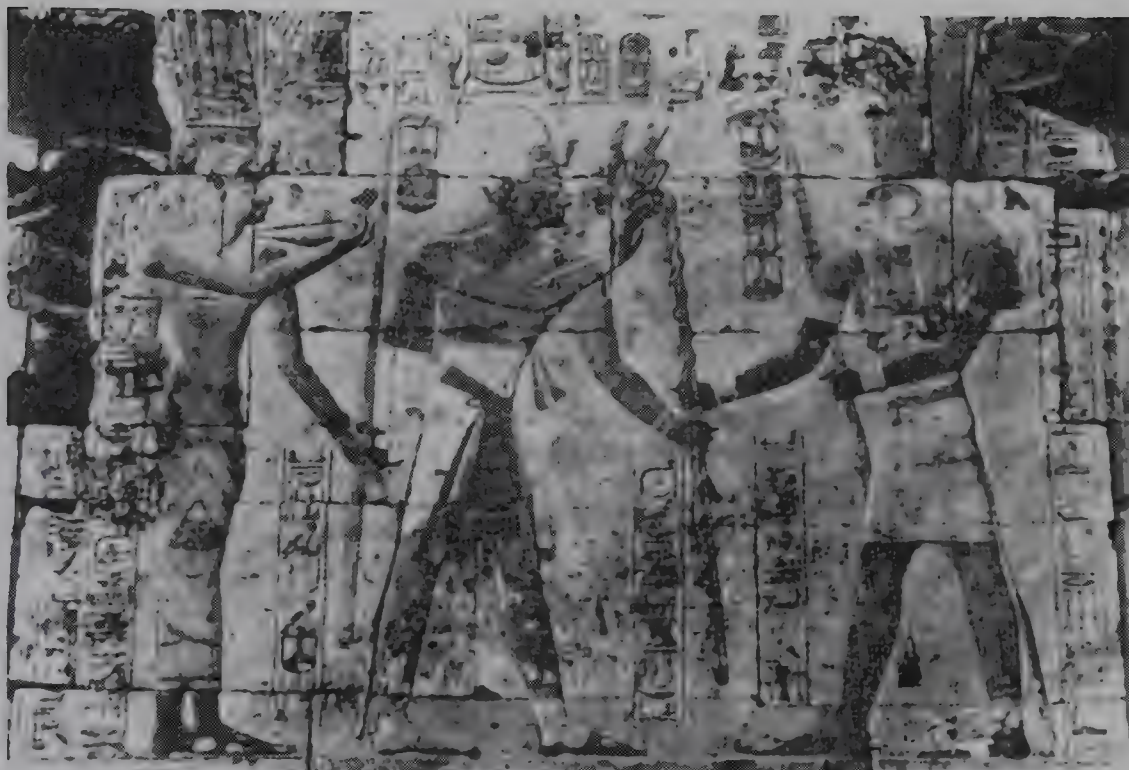
1. Seals 2–9 contain horned figures. What do you suppose the horn symbolized to these societies? Why, of all horned creatures, do you think the bull figures so prominently in these seals? Based on your answers, what can you infer about the religious and social values of these societies?
2. Consider the hairy males in seals 1, 7, and 8. What does hairiness seem to symbolize in each instance? Again, what do you infer about their societies' religious and social values from this evidence?
3. Consider the central figure in seal 6. How do you interpret his posture, and what does your answer suggest about the individual and his function? Consider his dress and the figures that surround him. Do these suggest humanity or divinity? If a human, what is his class? If a god, what sort of god?
4. What can you infer from these seals about possible lines of cultural contact and influence? Who *seems* to have influenced whom, and how? On a map, trace the possible routes of cultural exchange.

Sacred Kingship along the Nile



9 ▼ TWO TEMPLE RELIEFS

It is unclear whether several of the Indus seals that we have studied portray humans or deities, but the two temple *reliefs* (raised carvings on flat backgrounds) that follow clearly depict gods and kings. The piece on the top is Egyptian and dates from the thirteenth century B.C.E. Located at the temple of King Seti I at Abydos in Upper Egypt, it portrays, from right to left, Horus the falcon-god, King Seti, and the goddess Isis (see source 3). We will use it solely for comparison



Temple Relief: Isis, Seti I. and Horus



Temple Relief: Kushite King and Apedemak

with the relief below it. This piece of art is Kushitic and dates from after 300 B.C.E. It is a small fragment (six and one-half inches) of a temple tablet from Meroë, a *Nubian* city considerably distant from Abydos. It portrays a Nubian king of *Kush* and Apedemak, the lion-god of war.

The Nubians, who inhabited the region directly south of Egypt, were drawn into the orbit of their powerful neighbor to the north at an early date. Yet, while they borrowed quite a bit from the Egyptians, the Nubians managed to retain their indigenous culture. Around 800 B.C.E. the Nubians created the independent kingdom of Kush and around 730 B.C.E. were strong enough to conquer Egypt, which Kushite pharaohs ruled for close to a century. After being driven out of Egypt by the Assyrians, the Kushites eventually established a new capital for their kingdom at Meroë on the Middle Nile. Between about 350 B.C.E. and the early fourth century C.E., Kush was a major economic power in Northeast Africa, largely because of Meroë's rich iron deposits.

In the bottom relief on page 37, one of those mighty monarchs of Kush stands face to face with the Nubians' most powerful deity. Unfortunately we cannot decipher the writing above each figure, so we can only guess at the meaning of this scene. Perhaps the relief of Seti I provides a vital clue. There Horus, the divine son of Isis, is handing the scepter of power to Seti who, as long as he lives on Earth, will be identified with Horus, upon whose throne he sits. Note that the Meroitic tablet also portrays both god and king with what appear to be scepters.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. What do these two sculptures allow us to infer about the nature of royal power in Kush?
2. What do they tell us about the balance that the Kushites struck between accepting Egyptian influences and retaining traditional Nubian ways?

The Were-Jaguar

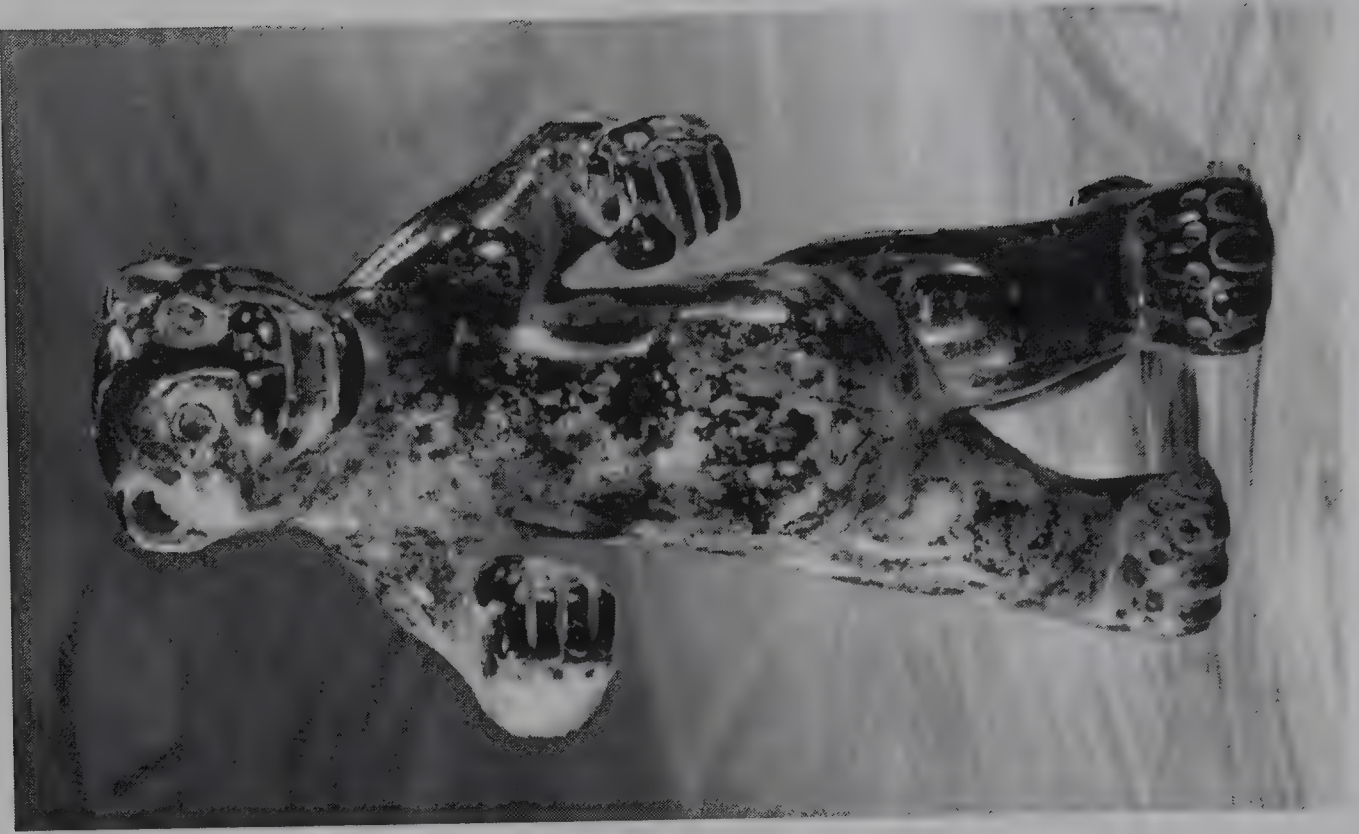


10 ▼ FOUR OLMEC STATUETTES

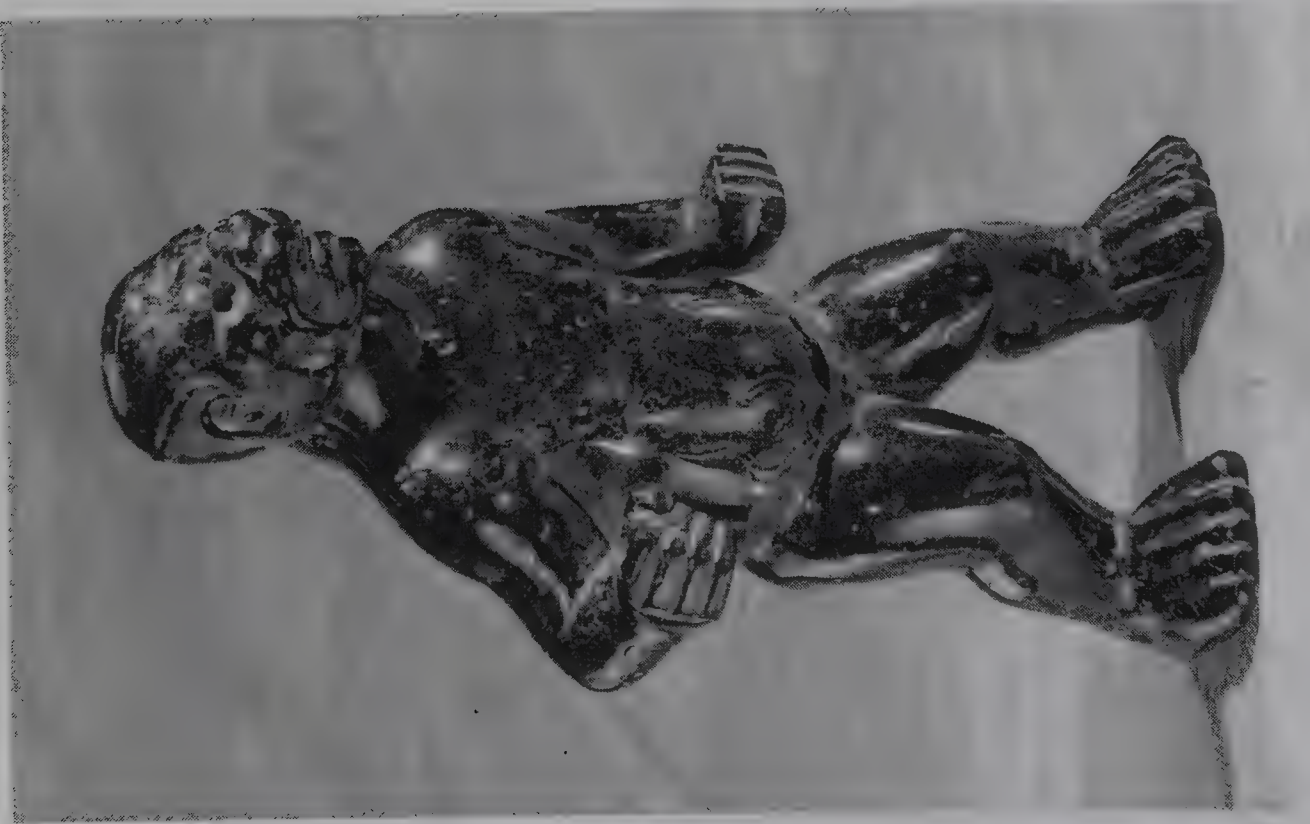
Olmec civilization, which emerged in the Gulf region of southeastern Mexico around 1200 B.C.E. and spread out from there, apparently laid the cultural basis for all subsequent pre-Columbian civilizations in Mexico and Central America. Evidence strongly suggests that later societies — such as the Maya, the Toltec, and the Aztec — continued to develop ways of thought and behavior articulated by the Olmec centuries and even millennia earlier.

As far as we know, the Olmec created no written language. We do not even know what they called themselves. The term *Olmec*, which means “People of the Rubber Country,” is Aztec in origin and refers to the fact that the Olmec inhabited a tropical, coastal region noted for its rubber trees. Although they left behind no written records, the Olmec bequeathed to posterity a rich artistic heritage, especially stone carvings. Carved in a variety of sizes and motifs, ranging from





4



3

monumental basalt heads of several tons to delicate jade masks and ornaments, these sculptures allow us to glimpse the world as seen by the Olmec.

One recurring figure in Olmec art is a creature who is part human and part jaguar. Known technically as a *were-jaguar*, this individual appears to have been central to Olmec religion. The following four statuettes, which date from the period ca. 900–300 B.C.E., suggest the Olmec fascination with the jaguar, a mostly nocturnal predator.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. Consider the statuettes in sequence, from 1 through 4. What is happening here? (Hint: Within many Amerindian cultures *shamans*, who served as intermediaries between the visible and spirit worlds, underwent rituals that they believed enabled them to be transformed into nonhuman [or superhuman] creatures.)
2. Why do you think the were-jaguar was such an important shamanic being?
3. What might these statuettes suggest about the Olmec view of humanity's place in regard to nature?

Chapter 2

Newcomers

From Nomads to Settlers

The oldest town excavated to date by archeologists is Jericho, which has been inhabited more or less continuously, but with several significant breaks, for the past ten thousand years. Around 8000 B.C.E. this site, which lies west of the Jordan River, covered more than eight acres and supported a population of two to three thousand people. Most impressive of all are the town's massive watch tower, walls, and encircling ditch, which serve as silent witnesses of the residents' fear of outsiders.

That fear was well based. Archeological evidence shows that Jericho suffered destruction on several occasions (see the introduction to source 15), and it is easy to imagine that some of those catastrophes were the handiwork of invaders attracted by the town's wealth. In all probability, not all of Jericho's assailants were *nomads*, or groups of related individuals who migrated along well-established seasonal routes, tending herds of domesticated animals as they moved. But surely some of the invaders were.

The tension between nomadic peoples and settled farmers, who became the backbone of civilization, is as old as agriculture itself, and it continued to be a major factor in global history well into modern times. Of course, there were many mutually beneficial relationships between settled communities and the fringe peoples who wandered their borders. However, these nomads, who served as mercenary soldiers, traders, and carriers of new ideas, could also be formidable foes, threatening the very existence of some civilizations. To be sure, threats and incursions cut both ways, and often nomads found their ways of life disrupted and imperiled by the outward expansion of neighboring civilizations.

In this chapter we shall consider the impact, settlements, and evolving cultures of three newcomers: the *Aryans* ("the noble people"), the *Greeks*, and the *Hebrews*, all of whom

appeared on the historical scene during the second millennium B.C.E. The state of present scholarship suggests that all three peoples, the Aryans, the Greeks, and the Hebrews, engaged in at least some limited agriculture prior to their moving into their new homelands. Many of the Hebrews, however, seem to have been more purely pastoralists when they marched into the light of history, very much like modern Bedouins who still wander the arid regions of Southwest Asia with their flocks.

The Indo-Europeans

By the late first millennium B.C.E., many of Eurasia's settled peoples, from the Celts of the British Isles in the West to the Tocharians of Central Asia in the East, spoke a variety of related languages that linguists identify as belonging to a language family known as *Indo-European*. As far as we can tell from the evidence, a core group of people who spoke a language known as *Proto-Indo-European* inhabited portions of western Asia about sixty-five hundred or more years ago. Some scholars push that date back as far as 6500 B.C.E.; a majority are more comfortable with the vague date ca. 4500–4000 B.C.E. Some researchers place the ancestral homeland of this language in *Anatolia* (modern Asiatic Turkey); a majority find the steppe region of southern Ukraine and Russia, just north of the Black and Caspian seas, a more likely location. Whatever the time and place of the emergence of Proto-Indo-European, beginning possibly as early as 4500 B.C.E., and continuing for several thousand years thereafter, groups who spoke various forms of this original language moved out of their ancestral homeland in waves and migrated east, west, north, and southeast. Once underway, these migration waves seem to have moved at a slow pace, but their historical impact was profound. The fact that *Aryan*, *Eire* (the Gaelic name for the Republic of Ireland), and *Iran* derive from the common archaic root-word *aryo*, which means “nobleman,” eloquently attests to the extent of the ancient Indo-European wanderings and settlements. Today almost all of the languages of Europe (Basque, Finnish, and Hungarian are the exceptions) belong to subgroups of the Indo-European family, as also do such disparate tongues as Armenian, Farsi (Persian), Hindi, Kurdish, and Romany (the language of the Gypsies).

In the course of these Indo-European migrations, the *Aryans* moved across the Hindu Kush mountain range and into the fertile Indus Valley, where they encountered the vestiges of Harappan civilization (Chapter 1, source 8), and the Greeks moved into the Balkans, where they absorbed or displaced the native people they encountered. The dates of their respective arrivals are uncertain, but both were securely settled in their new homelands by the mid second millennium B.C.E.

Life, Death, and the Gods in Aryan India



11 ▼ *THE RIG VEDA*

Until fairly recently, historians had generally credited the Aryans with conquering and destroying a vigorous Harappan civilization. The evidence now suggests that these Indo-European immigrants moved into a region whose civilization was already in shambles, due probably to a series of natural disasters that occurred around 1700 B.C.E. What is clear is that by 1500 the Aryans were ruling north-western India as an illiterate warrior aristocracy, and the arts of writing and statecraft had disappeared. India would not reemerge into the light of recorded history until around 600 B.C.E.

Because the early Aryans were a preliterate people, what little we know about them we derive from their oral tradition, which survives in four great collections of priestly hymns, chants, incantations, and ritual formulas known as the *Vedas*, all of which were composed in the Aryans' sacred language, *Sanskrit*. Veda means "wisdom" or "knowledge," and the Aryans accepted these collections of sacred poetry as the eternal word of the gods. For modern historians, however, the Vedas provide tantalizing glimpses into the historical dynamics of the era from roughly 1500 to about 600 B.C.E., a near millennium that is often referred to as India's *Vedic Age*.

As is common in preliterate societies, Aryan priests, known as *Brahmins*, were trained to perform prodigious feats of memory. Generation after generation they sang these songs and passed them on to those who followed. As a result, although the Vedas would not be written down until around 600 B.C.E., many of their songs reflect the religious, social, and political realities of Aryan life around 1500 or earlier. Conversely, other vedic hymns were the products of much later centuries and mirror the more sophisticated culture of an emerging Indo-Aryan civilization. It is the historian's task to identify and make sense out of these different elements.

The most celebrated and earliest of the four vedic collections is the *Rig Veda* (Verses of Knowledge), a compilation of 1,017 songs, which probably was largely put together in the form we know it between 1200 and 900 B.C.E., although it contains many elements that stretch back to long before the Aryans arrived in India. This Sanskrit masterpiece remains, even today, one of the sacred books of Hinduism. It is also, as far as we can determine, the earliest extant major work of literature in an Indo-European tongue, predating by several centuries the Homeric Greek epics.

The following three poems from the *Rig Veda* illustrate the evolution of Indo-Aryan religious thought. The first celebrates the victory over *Vritra*, the dragon of drought, by *Indra*, the early Aryans' chief deity. A lusty god of war, Indra was noted for imbibing every morning large amounts of *Soma*, a sacred hallucinogenic drink reserved for the gods and their priests, and for his military victories over the *Dasas* (slaves), the indigenous people of northern India whom the Aryans were subduing. In this particular hymn, however, Indra conquers another foe, *Vritra*, known as the *Encompasser*, and liberates the universe, which *Vritra*

has swallowed. In his conquest, Indra releases life-giving monsoon rains, irrigating waters that were vital to the Aryans, who were now settling down and farming the land. As the Aryans were absorbed into the rich cultural fabric of India, their forms of religious expression also changed. Indra, whose worship was the central reality of early vedic religious life, largely fell out of favor as a major deity in post-Vedic India, becoming simply the god of weather. Our second hymn hints at the change in religious perception that was taking place in later Indo-Aryan society as some Aryans even dared to doubt the very existence of this ancient god of battle. As this second hymn also indicates, the Aryans had originally envisioned Indra as the creator-god. Our third hymn, which is clearly one of the last vedic songs to be crafted, presents another vision of creation. In this poem the gods create the universe (and themselves) by sacrificing *Purusha*, the Cosmic Man, to himself. The paradoxical view of reality presented in this hymn would become a hallmark of classic Hindu thought, as we shall see in Chapter 3 and elsewhere.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. The hymn regarding the victory over Vritra is the earliest of the three poems. What sort of god is the Indra who appears in the first poem? What does your answer suggest about the society that worshiped him as its chief deity?
2. Compare the first hymn with the second hymn. Do you perceive any differences in tone or substance? What are they, and what do they suggest to you about changes in Indo-Aryan society?
3. What are the clues in the hymn to Purusha that point to its late composition?
4. What evidence is there in the third hymn for the emergence of what would become the Hindu *caste* system (Chapter 3, source 17), and how is that system explained and justified?
5. Can you find in the hymn to Purusha evidence of the basic Hindu concept of the unity of all life?
6. Compare Indra and Purusha as deities. In what ways do they represent significant historical changes that took place within Indo-Aryan society?

VICTORY OVER VRITRA

I will declare the manly deeds of Indra, the first
that he achieved, the thunder-wielder.

He slew the dragon, then disclosed the waters;
and cleft the channels of the mountain torrents.

He slew the dragon lying on the mountain: his
heavenly bolt of thunder Twashtar¹ fashioned.

Like lowing cows in rapid flow descending, the
waters glided downward to the ocean.

Impetuous as a bull, he chose the Soma, and
quaffed in threefold sacrifice the juices.

Maghavan² grasped the thunder for his weapon,
and smote to death this firstborn of the dragons.

When, Indra, you had slain the dragon's

¹The divine artisan.

²Lord Bountiful — another name for Indra.

firstborn, and overcome the charms of the enchanters.

Then, giving life to sun and dawn and heaven, you found not one foe to stand against you.

Indra with his own great and deadly thunder smote into pieces Vritra worst of Vritras:³

As trunks of trees, what time the axe has felled them, low on the earth so lies the prostrate dragon.

He, like a mad weak warrior, challenged Indra, the great impetuous many-slaying hero.

He, brooking not the clashing of the weapons, crushed — Indra's foe — the shattered forts in falling,⁴

Footless and handless still⁵ he challenged Indra, who smote him with his bolt between the shoulders.

Emasculated yet claiming manly vigor, thus Vritra lay with scattered limbs dismembered. . . .

Nothing availed him. Lightning, nothing, nor thunder, hailstorm or mist which he had spread around him.⁶

When Indra and the dragon strove in battle, Maghavan gained the victory for ever. . . .

Indra is king of all that moves and moves not, of creatures tame and horned, the thunder-wielder.

Over all living men he rules as sovereign, containing all as spokes within a rim.

WHO IS INDRA?

The god who had insight the moment he was born, the first who protected the gods with his

power of thought, before whose hot breath the two world-halves⁷ tremble at the greatness of his manly powers — he, my people, is Indra.

He who made fast the tottering earth, who made still the quaking mountains, who measured out and extended the expanse of the air, who propped up the sky — he, my people, is Indra.

He who killed the serpent and loosed the seven rivers, who drove out the cows that had been pent up by Vala,⁸ who gave birth to fire between two stones,⁹ the winner of booty in combats — he, my people, is Indra.

He by whom all these changes were rung, who drove the race of Dasas down into obscurity, who took away the flourishing wealth of the enemy as a winning gambler takes the stake — he, my people, is Indra.

He about whom they ask, 'Where is he?', or they say of him, the terrible one, 'He does not exist,' he who diminishes the flourishing wealth of the enemy as a gambler does — believe in him! He, my people, is Indra.

He who encourages the weary and the sick, and the poor priest who is in need, who helps the man who harnesses the stones to press Soma, he who has lips fine for drinking — he, my people, is Indra.

He under whose command are horses and cows and villages and all chariots, who gave birth to the sun and the dawn and led out the waters, he, my people, is Indra.

He who is invoked by both of two armies, enemies locked in combat, on this side and that side, he who is even invoked separately by each of two men standing on the very same chariot,¹⁰ he, my people, is Indra.

³"Dragon, worst of dragons."

⁴The clouds are pictured as forts imprisoning moisture.

⁵Vritra is serpentlike, lacking feet and hands.

⁶Vritra used magic to surround himself with storms and mist, but they failed him.

⁷Heaven and Earth.

⁸A demon who penned up Indra's cows, cows being tokens of wealth among the early Aryans.

⁹Indra is the bringer of fire, which is kindled by striking two flints. He is also the creator of lightning (the fire between [the stones of] Heaven and Earth) and Soma, which is crushed between stones. He also created the sun, another fire between Heaven and Earth.

¹⁰Two persons rode in a war chariot, the priest/charioteer and the warrior-noble (see Chapter 3, source 17).

He without whom people do not conquer, he whom they call on for help when they are fighting, who became the image of everything, who shakes the unshakeable — he, my people, is Indra.

He who killed with his weapon all those who had committed a great sin, even when they did not know it, he who does not pardon the arrogant man for his arrogance, who is the slayer of the Dasyus,¹¹ he, my people, is Indra.

He who in the fortieth autumn discovered Sambara living in the mountains,¹² who killed the violent serpent, the Danu,¹³ as he lay there, he, my people, is Indra.

He, the mighty bull who with his seven reins let loose the seven rivers to flow, who with his thunderbolt in his hand hurled down Rauhina,¹⁴ as he was climbing up to the sky, he, my people, is Indra.

Even the sky and the earth bow low before him, and the mountains are terrified of his hot breath; he who is known as the Soma-drinker, with his thunderbolt in his hand, with the thunderbolt in his palm, he, my people, is Indra.

He who helps with his favor the one who presses and the one who cooks,¹⁵ the praiser and the preparer, he for whom prayer is nourishment, for whom Soma is the special gift, he, my people, is Indra.

You¹⁶ who furiously grasp the prize for the one who presses and the one who cooks, you are truly real. Let us be dear to you, Indra, all our days, and let us speak as men of power in the sacrificial gathering.

TO PURUSHA

A thousand heads had Purusha,¹⁷ a thousand eyes, a thousand feet.

He covered earth on every side, and spread ten fingers' breadth beyond.

This Purusha is all that yet has been and all that is to be;

The lord of immortality which waxes greater still by food.

So mighty is his greatness; yea, greater than this is Purusha.

All creatures are one-fourth of him, three-fourths eternal life in heaven.¹⁸

With three-fourths Purusha went up: one-fourth of him again was here.

Thence he strode out to every side over what eats not and what eats.

From him Viraj¹⁹ was born; again Purusha from Viraj was born.

As soon as he was born he spread eastward and westward o'er the earth.

When gods prepared the sacrifice with Purusha as their offering,

Its oil was spring, the holy gift was autumn; summer was the wood.

They balm'd as victim on the grass²⁰ Purusha born in earliest time.

With him the deities and all Sadhyas²¹ and Rishis²² sacrificed.

¹¹The Dasas, or slaves.

¹²A demon who kept Soma from Indra in mountain fortresses.

¹³Vritra.

¹⁴An obscure enemy about whom nothing else is known.

¹⁵Those who press and those who cook Soma.

¹⁶Indra.

¹⁷Purusha, the all-pervading universal spirit and source of all life, is conceived as a god with countless eyes, hands, and feet. Purusha is both limitless and able to be enclosed

in the smallest of spaces. In an act celebrated by this poem, Purusha is simultaneously the sacrifice and the sacrificer.

¹⁸One-quarter of Purusha is found in all mortal creation; three-fourths of Purusha is divine and eternal.

¹⁹The female creative germ.

²⁰Special grasses laid out during vedic sacrifices for the gods to sit upon.

²¹A class of demigods.

²²Sages.

From that great general sacrifice the dripping fat was gathered up.

He formed the creatures of the air, and animals both wild and tame.

From that great general sacrifice Richas and Samahymns²³ were born:

Therefrom the meters were produced,²⁴ the Yajus²⁵ had its birth from it.

From it were horses born, from it all creatures with two rows of teeth:

From it were generated cows, from it the goats and sheep were born.

When they divided Purusha how many portions did they make?

What do they call his mouth, his arms? What do they call his thighs and feet?

The Brahmin²⁶ was his mouth, of both his arms was the Rajanya²⁷ made.

His thighs became the Vaisya,²⁸ from his feet the Sudra²⁹ was produced.

The Moon was gendered from his mind, and from his eye the Sun had birth;

Indra and Agni³⁰ from his mouth were born, and Vayu³¹ from his breath.

Forth from his navel came mid-air; the sky was fashioned from his head;

Earth from his feet, and from his ear the regions. Thus they formed the worlds.

Seven fencing-logs had he, thrice seven layers of fuel were prepared,³²

When the gods, offering sacrifice, bound, as their victim, Purusha.

Gods, sacrificing, sacrificed the victim: these were the earliest holy ordinances.

The mighty ones attained the height of heaven, there where the Sadhyas, gods of old, are dwelling.

²³The constituent elements of the *Rig Veda*.

²⁴The verses of the *Sama Veda*. It is largely a collection of parts of the *Rig Veda* arranged for religious ceremonial use.

²⁵The ritual formulas of the *Yajur Veda*. It was compiled a century or two after the *Rig Veda* and served as a collection of sacrificial chants.

²⁶An Aryan priest.

²⁷The *Rajanyas*, or *Kshatriyas*, comprised the ruling or warrior class, which later became a caste.

²⁸This class initially encompassed free herders and farmers; later, when it was a caste, it included traders and artisans.

²⁹The slave and servant class, which later became the fourth and lowest caste. The term was originally applied to the Dasas, the native people whom the Aryans conquered and subjugated when they entered India.

³⁰The god of fire and sacrifice. This Sanskrit word is cognate with *ignis*, the Latin word for "fire" (hence, *ignite* in English).

³¹The wind.

³²For a sacrificial fire.

A Journey to the Underworld



12 ▼ Homer, *THE ODYSSEY*

By 1600 B.C.E. history's first identifiable Greeks, a people who called themselves the *Achaeans*, had created in the Balkan Peninsula a decentralized warrior civilization, which we term *Mycenaean*. The name derives from *Mycenae*, a city that exercised a loose leadership over the petty principalities of southern and central Greece. Around 1450 B.C.E. the Achaeans were masters of the island civilization of Crete and, as accomplished pirates and maritime merchants, a major force in the eastern Mediterranean. It is against this background that we must place the

Achaean expedition against *Troy*, a city in Anatolia, which took place around 1200.

The sack of rival Troy was the high-water mark for the Achaeans. Within a century Mycenaean civilization was collapsing, in part, at least, because of internecine wars among the various Achaean principalities. What other factors were involved remain a mystery. By 1100 B.C.E. the highly specialized arts and crafts, including literacy, that had characterized Bronze Age Greece at its height had disappeared or were severely reduced in quality and quantity. Greece had entered a period we call the *Greek Dark Age* (ca. 1100–ca. 800), a term that, more than anything else, implies our overall ignorance of what was happening in the Greek World during these centuries. About all we can say with any degree of certainty is that the Greeks lost the art of writing, their political and economic structures seem to have been drastically reduced in size, and a relatively weak and impoverished Greek World ceased to be a major power in the eastern Mediterranean. At the same time, however, recent archeological finds have tended to underscore the continuities between late Mycenaean society and the classical *Hellenic World* that arose after 800 B.C.E., despite the losses and retrenchments. What is more, during this so-called Dark Age the Greek *polis*, or city-state, emerged as a major (many would say *the* major) component of Greek civilization. By 800 B.C.E., *poleis* (the plural of *polis*) were scattered all over the Greek World.

When Greek civilization (with its accompanying literacy) reemerged around the middle of the eighth century B.C.E., it was centered along the western shores of Anatolia, where Greek colonists had begun settling around the mid eleventh century B.C.E. Because so many of these Greek refugees spoke a Greek dialect known as *Ionian*, the region became known as *Ionia*. Here across the Aegean Sea, Greek settlers, benefiting from their contact with the far-older civilizations of Southwest Asia (and, to a lesser extent, Egypt), produced the first Greek literature known to us (as opposed to the bureaucratic lists left behind by Mycenaean civilization). Of all of this early literature, the most significant are two epic poems, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, both ascribed to a bard called *Homer*.

The ancients had no doubt there was a historical Homer, a blind poet who created both works. Modern scholars are less certain, and most would agree that we will never know the truth about Homer's identity or the exact process by which his epics were fashioned. Yet, there are some points on which scholars are generally agreed. Internal evidence (the words, phrases, and allusions within each poem) has led most researchers to agree that, regardless of whether Homer was one, two, or many poets, these two poems largely reached their final form in Anatolia during the late eighth century. Whether they were written down that early or transmitted orally is impossible to say. What is clear, however, is that both epics exhibit all of the hallmarks of oral poetry, suggesting strongly that in the act of creation the poet or poets whom we call Homer drew heavily from a long tradition of oral poetic stories, which had been preserved for centuries in the memories of wandering professional bards.

Very much like the *Rig Veda*, therefore, the Homeric epics preserve vestiges of a much earlier age — in this case the Late Mycenaean Age — but are also overlaid with the values, social practices, and modes of perception of later Greek society. When used judiciously, the two epics tell us a good deal about life in the thirteenth

century B.C.E. — the age of the Trojan War. At the same time, they often reflect the culture of Late Dark Age society, especially that of the ninth and eighth centuries. The problem facing the historian is to separate one from the other.

On one level both poems celebrate such warrior virtues as personal honor, bravery, and loyalty to one's comrades, and on a deeper level they probe the hidden recesses of human motivation and emotion. On a third level the poems address the issue of the meaning of human suffering. Why do humans experience pain and sorrow? Are they captive to the whims of the gods? Are they and the gods subject to an overarching destiny that neither can avoid?

More to human scale than the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey* tells two intertwined stories. One traces the ten-year-long homeward voyage of the Achaean hero *Odysseus*. This clever adventurer has to battle, with cunning and skill, the enmity of Poseidon, god of the sea, and a variety of superhuman opponents before finally arriving home to his island kingdom of Ithaca. The second story details the attempts of Odysseus's wife and son, Penelope and Telemachus, who, with equal cunning and skill, attempt to stall indefinitely the advances of a group of suitors who seek to marry the presumed widow. As the suitors impatiently wait to see whom she will marry, they despoil Odysseus and Penelope's home and waste Telemachus's patrimony. The two story lines merge when Odysseus returns and, with the aid of his son and several loyal servants, wreaks vengeance on the suitors by killing them all. Unlike most epics, the story ends happily with Penelope and Odysseus reunited and Telemachus assured of his inheritance.

The following selection describes one of Odysseus's most daring adventures on his troubled homeward journey — a visit to the House of Hades, or the Land of the Dead. Here he consults Teiresias, the blind Theban seer, who even in death retains his prophetic powers. Odysseus also meets the shades of many famous women and men, including his old comrade-in-arms Achilles, the Achaeans' greatest warrior and the central character of the *Iliad*, who was killed prior to the fall of Troy.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. What values did Odysseus's society hold in highest esteem?
2. How does Homer address the issue of human responsibility for ill fortune?
3. Is there a destiny that humans cannot escape? If so, what role do the gods play in this destiny?
4. It is often stated that the Greeks focused on human beings and human concerns. Indeed, it is said that for the Greeks the human was the standard of measurement for all things. Does this selection seem to support or contradict that judgment?
5. Compare Achilles' sentiment toward the land of the dead with Enkidu's vision in *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (source 1). What do you conclude from your analysis?
6. Compare Achaean society with that of the Aryans. What strikes you as more significant, the similarities or the differences? What do you conclude from your answer?

Now the spirit of Teiresias of Thebes came forward, bearing a golden staff in his hand. Knowing who I am, he addressed me: "Son of Laertes, sprung from Zeus,¹ Odysseus, known for your many wiles, why, unhappy man, have you left the sunlight to behold the dead in this cheerless region? Step back from the trench and put aside your sharp sword so that I might drink the blood² and thereby prophesy the truth to you." Thus he spoke. I, stepping backward, drove my silver-studded sword into its scabbard. When he had drunk the black blood, this noble prophet addressed me with these words.

"Lord Odysseus, you seek a honey-sweet homeward journey, but a god will make your travels difficult. I do not think you can escape the notice of the Earth-shaker,³ who has set his mind in enmity against you, enraged because you blinded his beloved son.⁴ Even so, you still might be able to reach home, although in sorry circumstances, if you are willing to restrain your desires, and those of your comrades, beginning when your seaworthy ship leaves the deep blue waters and approaches the island of Thrinacie,⁵ where you will see the grazing cattle and fat sheep of Helios,⁶ who sees and hears everything. If you leave the animals untouched and concentrate solely on getting home, it is possible that all of you might reach Ithaca, although in sorry circumstances. If you injure these animals, however, I foresee destruction for your ship and its crew, and even if you yourself manage to escape, you will return home late, in a sorry state, in an alien ship, having lost all your companions.⁷ And

even there at home you will find troubles. Overbearing men will be consuming your wealth, wooing your goddesslike wife, and offering her bridal gifts. Certainly, following your arrival, you will gain revenge on these suitors for their evil deeds. When you have slain the suitors in your halls, whether by stratagem or in an open fight with sharp bronze weapons, you must again set out on a journey. You must take a well-fashioned oar and travel until you reach a people who are ignorant of the sea and never eat food mixed with salt, and who know nothing about our purple-ribbed ships and the well-fashioned oars that serve as ships wings. And I say you will receive a sign, a very clear one that you cannot miss. When another traveler upon meeting you remarks that you are carrying a winnowing-fan across your broad back,⁸ plant your well-fashioned oar in the earth and offer Lord Poseidon the sacrifice of a ram, a bull,⁹ and a boar, the mate of the wild she-swine. Then return home and there make sacred offerings to all the immortal gods who inhabit wide heaven, and do so to each in order of rank. As for death, it will come to you at last gently out of the sea in a comfortable old age when you are surrounded by a prosperous people. This I tell you truly." . . .

Next came the spirits of Achilles, son of Peleus, of Patroclus,¹⁰ of noble Antilochus,¹¹ and of Aias,¹² who surpassed all the Danaans¹³ in beauty of physique and manly bearing, except for the flawless son of Peleus.¹⁴ The spirit of swift-footed Achilles of the house of Aeacus¹⁵ recognized me, and mournfully spoke in winged words: "Son of

¹The greatest of the Greek gods. The title implies Odysseus's godlike heroic qualities.

²The spirits of the dead can communicate with Odysseus only after he drinks blood from animals he has sacrificed.

³Poseidon, god of the sea and of earthquakes.

⁴The Cyclops, a son of Poseidon, was a one-eyed, cannibal giant whom Odysseus had blinded in self-defense.

⁵The mythical island of the sun-god Helios, where he pastured his sacred cattle; ancient Greek commentators on Homer identified it as the island of Sicily.

⁶The sun-god.

⁷The crew will kill and eat the sun-god's flocks, and all, except Odysseus, will die as a result.

⁸Odysseus will be in a region where no one knows what an oar's function is. Rather, they will mistake it for the long-

handled shallow basket in which grain was tossed in order to separate the cereal from the chaff.

⁹The bull was sacred to Poseidon. (See Chapter 1, source 8 for examples of the popularity of the bull as a sacred animal.)

¹⁰Achilles' best friend, who also died at Troy.

¹¹An Achaean hero who fell at Troy while defending his father, King Nestor of Pylos (note 21).

¹²The Achaeans' second-greatest warrior; he committed suicide at Troy after Odysseus bested him in a contest for the armor of the dead Achilles.

¹³Another name for the Achaeans.

¹⁴Achilles.

¹⁵The ancestor from whom Peleus and his son Achilles were descended. Homer's heroes always identified themselves by reference to their fathers and other notable ancestors.

Laertes, sprung from Zeus, Odysseus, known for your many wiles! Rash man, what greater deed than this remains for you to devise in your heart? How did you dare to descend to Hades¹⁶ realm, where the dead dwell as witless images of worn-out mortals?"

Thus he spoke, and I answered in return. "Achilles, son of Peleus, by far the mightiest of the Achaeans, I came to consult with Teiresias in the hope of his giving me a plan whereby I might reach rocky Ithaca. For I have not yet come near the land of Achaea,¹⁷ nor yet set foot on my own island, but have been constantly beset by misfortunes. How different from your situation, Achilles, you who are more fortunate than any man whoever was or will be. For in the old days, when you were alive, we Argives¹⁸ honored you as though you were a god, and now that you are here, you rule nobly among the dead. Therefore, grieve not, Achilles, that you are dead."

So I spoke, and he immediately answered, saying: "Do not endeavor to speak soothingly to me of death, Lord Odysseus. I would rather live on earth as the hired help of some landless man whose own livelihood was meager, than be lord over all the dead who have perished. Enough of that. Tell me about my son, that lordly young man. Did he follow me to war and play a leading role in it? And tell me about noble Peleus. . . . I am not there in the sunlight to aid Peleus with that great strength that was once mine on the broad plains of Troy, where I slew the best of the enemy's army in defense of the Argives. If, but for an hour, I could return to my father's house with such strength as I once had, I would give those who do him violence and dishonor him cause to rue my might and my invincible hands."

So he spoke, and I answered: "I have heard nothing about noble Peleus, but I will give you all the news you desire of your dear son, Neoptolemus.¹⁹ It was I who brought him from Scyros²⁰ in my well-fashioned, hollow ship to join the ranks of the well-armed Achaeans. Whenever we held a council meeting during the siege of Troy, he was always the first to speak, and his words never missed the mark. Godlike Nestor²¹ and I alone surpassed him. As often as we fought with bronze weapons on the Trojan plain, he never lagged behind in the ranks or crowd, but would always run far out in front, yielding first place to no one, and he slew many men in mortal combat. I could not name all whom he killed in defense of the Argives. . . . Again, when we, the best of the Argives, were about to enter into the horse that Epeus made,²² and responsibility lay solely with me to either open or keep closed the door of our stout-built ambush, the other Danaan leaders and chieftains were wiping away tears from their eyes and each man's limbs shook beneath him. But never did my eyes see his fair face grow pale, nor did I see him wiping away tears from his cheeks. Rather, he earnestly begged me to allow him to sally forth from the horse, and he kept handling his sword-hilt and his heavy bronze spear in his eagerness to inflict harm on the Trojans. Following our sack of the lofty city of Priam,²³ he boarded his ship with a full share of the spoils and his special prize.²⁴ And he was unscathed, never cut by a sharp sword or wounded in close combat, as often happens in war, since Ares²⁵ rages in a confused fashion."

So I spoke, and the spirit of the son of Aeacus departed with long strides across the field of asphodel,²⁶ rejoicing that his son was preeminent among men.

¹⁶The god of the dead.

¹⁷The land of the Achaeans — mainland Greece.

¹⁸Another name for the Achaeans.

¹⁹Fittingly, his name means "New War."

²⁰The Aegean island where Achilles' son had been raised.

²¹The aged king of Pylos noted for his wisdom and sage advice.

²²The so-called Trojan horse, through which the Achaeans finally were able to capture Troy.

²³The last king of Troy.

²⁴At the division of the Trojan survivors, Neoptolemus was awarded Andromache, widow of Hector, Troy's greatest hero, whom Achilles had killed in single combat.

²⁵The god of war.

²⁶A flower that carpeted the Elysian Fields, where the spirits of dead heroes, such as Achilles, resided.

The Hebrews and Their Neighbors

Recent excavations at the long-forgotten city of Ebla reveal that the land of Palestine-Syria (the region covered by the modern states of Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and the new Palestinian entity) has known urban civilization since about 3000 B.C.E., although its cities did not begin to reach significant size until around 2500. Inasmuch as this land serves as a bridge between Egypt and Mesopotamia, it has suffered the fate of all regions that serve as crossroads: It has historically been prey to invaders. One of its earliest known conquerors was Sargon the Great of Akkad in Mesopotamia, who sacked Ebla in the twenty-fourth century.

Around 1200 B.C.E., in the midst of a number of invasions and upheavals that tested all of the civilizations of Southwest Asia and the eastern Mediterranean, several groups of invaders penetrated the region of *Canaan* (roughly modern Israel, Palestine, and southern Lebanon) and established themselves there at the expense of the indigenous, ethnically diverse population. One of these invaders was a mixed group from the Aegean, who settled down in cities along the coast of what is today the state of Israel. These people, who included a large percentage of uprooted Mycenaean Greeks and Cretans, became known as the *Philistines*. A second major wave was composed of another hybrid mass of people, the *Hebrews*, who spoke a language that belongs to a family of tongues we term *Semitic*.

As is the case with the Indo-European language family, Semitic origins are lost in the mists of time, but we know that the Akkadians, who spoke a Semitic language, inhabited the middle Tigris-Euphrates Valley as early as 2900 B.C.E. The evidence suggests that these early Semites migrated into Mesopotamia from the western deserts, and consequently historians believe the original homeland of the Semitic language family was Arabia.

Whatever the distant origins of their language, the people whom history identifies as the Hebrews seem to have been originally an ethnically mixed mass of Semitic peoples who infiltrated into Canaan out of the southern and eastern deserts and settled the inland high ground overlooking the Philistine cities. Indeed, the term *Hebrew* might derive from the word '*apiru*, which was used throughout Mesopotamia and Egypt to refer to the diverse peoples of inferior social status who inhabited the fringes of civilized societies. Egyptian sources of the fourteenth century treat these '*apiru* as nothing more than outlaws and raiders.

Prior to the waves of invaders, the Hittite and Egyptian empires had fought one another for mastery over Syria-Palestine. With the destruction of Hittite civilization and the concurrent severe weakening of the Egyptian empire around 1200 B.C.E., a momentary power vacuum occurred along the eastern rim of the Mediterranean. In the absence of any outside imperial power, the various cultural groups of Syria-Palestine, including the Hebrews, had several centuries of relative freedom in which to struggle with one another and to amalgamate.

For the Hebrews, amalgamation was both seductively easy and potentially disastrous. The vast majority of the peoples who already inhabited Canaan also spoke Semitic languages and shared other cultural characteristics with these ruder

newcomers. Something, however, set the Hebrews apart and enabled them to mold a distinctive culture. As they coalesced as an identifiable people, the Hebrews evolved the idea that they enjoyed the special protection of a god whom they called YHWH (probably pronounced “Yahveh”). In return for that protection, this deity demanded their sole devotion. A corollary of that belief was the conviction that if the Hebrews were to prosper in Canaan, a land that YHWH had promised them, they had to maintain religious (and therefore cultural) distance from all other people.

Establishing a Covenant with Humanity



13 ▼ *THE BOOK OF GENESIS*

The major documentary source for both the process of cultural fusion and the fierce struggles that took place among the various groups of Iron Age settlers in Syria-Palestine is a collection of sacred Hebrew writings known as the *Bible* (from the Greek word *biblos*, which means “book”). The exclusively Hebrew, or Jewish, portion of the Bible, known to Jews as the *Tanakh* but called by Christians the *Old Testament*, consists of many different types of literature. These were mainly composed, edited, and reedited from roughly 1000 B.C.E. to possibly as late as the second century B.C.E., although Jewish religious authorities did not fix the *Tanakh*’s final canon, or official body of accepted texts, until 100 C.E. This means that biblical accounts of early Hebrew history are, in many cases, centuries removed from the events they narrate. It is nevertheless clear that these later authors often used early written and oral sources that are now lost to us. Moreover, although these authors primarily wrote history from a theological perspective and consequently clothed their stories in myth, independent archeological evidence has often confirmed the basic historical outline of many but not all of the biblical stories concerning the fortunes of the Hebrews in Canaan, the *Promised Land*.

The first book of the Bible is known as *Genesis* (the beginning) and recounts the story of humanity’s relationship with YHWH from Creation through the settlement of the Hebrew people, also known as the *Children of Israel*, in Egypt. Tradition ascribes its authorship to *Moses*, one of the most enigmatic and elusive figures in the Bible. Modern scholars are divided over whether or not there was a historical Moses who led the Israelites out of Egypt and passed on to them a set of laws that made them uniquely YHWH’s people (source 14). Later Israelites did not doubt Moses’ historicity, but this did not necessarily mean they believed Moses actually wrote or dictated Genesis. Rather, within the context of their culture, calling this book “Mosaic” meant they understood Moses to be the one who provided the initial and pervading spirit behind the work. In all likelihood, a number of different authors composed and reworked Genesis over the period from before 900 B.C.E. to after 721 B.C.E., but they might well have drawn on traditions that stretched back to the time of the Israelites’ infiltration into Canaan.

The following selection recounts a popular Southwest Asian theme that we saw in Chapter 1, source 1: the Flood. As you read it, be aware not only of the

striking similarities between it and the story told by Utnapishtim but of the even more significant differences. Remember that the author is making a religious statement.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. Why does YHWH destroy all humanity except Noah and his family? How does YHWH's reasoning compare with the Mesopotamian gods' reason for wanting to destroy humans and Ea's decision to warn Utnapishtim?
2. Compare YHWH's treatment of Noah and his descendants following the Flood with the Mesopotamian gods' treatment of Utnapishtim after the waters had receded.
3. What do the Mesopotamian gods demand of humans? What does Noah's God demand?
4. From these several comparisons, what picture emerges of the god of the Hebrews? In what ways is their deity similar to the gods of Mesopotamia? In what ways does their god differ?
5. Consider the story of Noah's curse on Canaan. What has Ham done to deserve such anger, and why is it that his son suffers as a consequence? Do your answers tell us anything about Hebrew social values and practices at this time?
6. How does the story of the curse on Ham have relevance to the Hebrews' settlement in the land of Canaan? What does this suggest about the story's date of composition? How does this illustrate the Hebrews' use of myth to explain and justify historical events?

The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. So the Lord said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the ground, man and beast and creeping things and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them." But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord. . . .

Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation; Noah walked with God. And Noah had three sons, Shem,¹ Ham, and Japheth.

Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. And God saw

the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth. And God said to Noah, "I have determined to make an end of all flesh; for the earth is filled with violence through them; behold, I will destroy them with the earth. Make yourself an ark of gopher wood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch. . . . For behold, I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life from under heaven; everything that is on the earth shall die. But I will establish my covenant with you; and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you. And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring

¹Shem was the eldest of Noah's sons and the one from whom the Hebrews claimed direct descent. The term *Semite* is derived from the name.

two of every sort into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female. Of the birds according to their kinds, and of the animals according to their kinds, of every creeping thing of the ground according to its kind, two of every sort shall come in to you, to keep them alive. Also take with you every sort of food that is eaten, and store it up; and it shall serve as food for you and for them." Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him.

Then the Lord said to Noah, "Go into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you are righteous before me in this generation. Take with you seven pairs of all clean animals,² the male and his mate; and a pair of the animals that are not clean, the male and his mate; and seven pairs of the birds of the air also, male and female, to keep their kind alive upon the face of all the earth. For in seven days I will send rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living thing that I have made will blot out from the face of the ground." And Noah did all that the Lord had commanded him.

Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters came upon the earth. And Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him went into the ark, to escape the waters of the flood. Of clean animals, and of animals that are not clean, and of birds, and of everything that creeps on the ground, two and two, male and female, went into the ark with Noah, as God had commanded Noah. And after seven days the waters of the flood came upon the earth.

In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened.³ And rain fell upon the earth forty days and forty nights. . . .

And the waters prevailed so mightily upon the earth that all the high mountains under the whole

heaven were covered. . . . He blotted out every living thing that was upon the face of the ground, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the air; they were blotted out from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those that were with him in the ark. And the waters prevailed upon the earth a hundred and fifty days.

But God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the cattle that were with him in the ark. And God made a wind blow over the earth, and the waters subsided; the fountains of the deep and the windows of the heavens were closed, the rain from the heavens was restrained, and the waters receded from the earth continually. At the end of a hundred and fifty days the waters had abated; and in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, the ark came to rest upon the mountains of Ararat. And the waters continued to abate until the tenth month; in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains were seen.

At the end of forty days Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made, and sent forth a raven; and it went to and fro until the waters were dried up from the earth. Then he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters had subsided from the face of the ground; but the dove found no place to set her foot, and she returned to him to the ark, for the waters were still on the face of the whole earth. So he put forth his hand and took her and brought her into the ark with him. He waited another seven days, and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark; and the dove came back to him in the evening, and lo, in her mouth a freshly plucked olive leaf; so Noah knew that the waters had subsided from the earth. Then he waited another seven days, and sent forth the dove; and she did not return to him any more.

In the six hundred and first year,⁴ in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters

²A ritually clean animal, such as a sheep, was one worthy of sacrifice to YHWH. An unclean animal, such as a predator or a scavenger, would never be offered in sacrifice.

³The view of the world shared by the peoples of Southwest Asia at this time was that the world's firmament, or land,

was totally surrounded, above and below, by water. The water above was normally kept in place by a translucent crystalline sphere. Rain was the seepage of water through that sphere.

⁴Of Noah's life.

were dried from off the earth; and Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and behold, the face of the ground was dry. . . . Then God said to Noah, "Go forth from the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons' wives with you. Bring forth with you every living thing that is with you of all flesh — birds and animals and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth — that they may breed abundantly on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply upon the earth." So Noah went forth, and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him. And every beast, every creeping thing, and every bird, everything that moves upon the earth, went forth by families out of the ark.

Then Noah built an altar to the Lord, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And when the Lord smelled the pleasing odor, the Lord said in his heart, "I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I ever again destroy every living creature as I have done. While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease."

And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth. The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every bird of the air, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea; into your hand they are delivered. Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you; and as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. Only you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood.⁵ For your lifeblood I will surely require a reckoning; of every beast I will require it and of man; of every man's brother I will require the life of man. Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for God made man in his own image. And you, be fruitful and multiply,

bring forth abundantly on the earth and multiply in it."

Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, "Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth." And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I set my bow⁶ in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will look upon it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth." God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant which I have established between me and all flesh that is upon the earth."

The sons of Noah who went forth from the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Ham was the father of Canaan. These three were the sons of Noah; and from these the whole earth was peopled.

Noah was the first tiller of the soil. He planted a vineyard; and he drank of the wine, and became drunk, and lay uncovered in his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside. Then Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it upon both their shoulders, and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father; their faces were turned away, and they did not see their

⁵Raw meat or meat dripping with blood could not be consumed.

⁶A rainbow. Compare this with Ishtar's rainbow (Chapter 1, source 1).

father's nakedness. When Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his youngest son had done to him, he said

"Cursed be Canaan;
a slave of slaves shall he be to
his brothers."⁷

He also said,

"Blessed by the Lord my God be Shem;
and let Canaan be his slave.
God enlarge Japheth,
and let him dwell in the tents of Shem;⁸
and let Canaan be his slave."

After the flood Noah lived three hundred and fifty years. All the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years; and he died.

⁷According to Hebrew legend, Ham and his son Canaan were the direct ancestors of the Canaanites, the people whom the Hebrews were dispossessing of their lands.

⁸Japheth, according to Hebrew tradition, was the ancestor

of the Indo-European peoples of northern Syria and beyond, such as the Hittites and Hurrians. From the Hebrew perspective, the Hebrews and the northern Indo-Europeans were dividing up the land of Syria-Palestine between them.

Establishing a Covenant with a Chosen People



14 ▼ *THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY*

The story of Noah tells of YHWH's post-Deluge covenant with all living creatures; the story of the Hebrews' *Exodus* (going out) from Egypt tells of their special Covenant with this god and their becoming a *Chosen People* with a new identity.

The Hebrews had probably entered Egypt in the time of the conquest of Lower Egypt, or the Delta region, by the Hyksos (rulers from foreign lands), who came in from the deserts of western Asia around 1700 B.C.E. With the overthrow of the Hyksos and the re-establishment of native Egyptian rule around 1570, significant numbers of these Hebrews were probably enslaved, as happened to many Asian prisoners of war in Egypt at that time. That at least seems to be a likely scenario if we seek to fit the story told in the Bible's Book of Exodus with the sketchy picture we have of Egyptian history during the Second Intermediate Period and the New Kingdom that followed.

At this point reconstruction of the next stage of Hebrew history becomes even more problematic, due to the many, sometimes contradictory, layers of legend and folktale motifs that we find in the biblical story of their flight from Egypt. Yet, several aspects of the story have the ring of validity and lead many historians to accept the basic historicity of the Exodus, even though they might question many of the details of the story as narrated in the Bible. The fact that the Israelites trace their origins as a people to an age of bondage and oppression, rather than claiming kings and heroes as their progenitors, suggests that this less than glorious beginning was rooted in historical reality. Equally telling is the origin of Moses' name, which most likely derives from the Egyptian verb *msy* (born). This hint of Egyptian heritage lends a certain credence to his presumed historicity, even though there is no known record of Moses or the flight of the Hebrews outside of the Bible. Assuming that their oral traditions retained a valid core memory of their flight from Egypt and subsequent wanderings, we can say with hesitant confidence that a charismatic leader, whom history remembers as Moses,

arose to lead a band of these Hebrews out of Egypt and to the borders of Canaan, probably sometime around the reign of Rameses the Great (r. ?1279–1213? B.C.E.). Further, and most important of all, in the process of their migration, Moses molded the Hebrews into a people and wedded them to his god YHWH. No longer a loose band of nomads, they were now the *Israelites* — descendants of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (also called Israel).

The story of this transformation is told in several books of the Bible. This section comes from *Deuteronomy*, which was shaped into the form in which we have it during the reign of King Josiah of Jerusalem (r. 640–609 B.C.E.). *Deuteronomy* was composed or, more likely, recast at a time of religious reformation, when Josiah was attempting to abolish all forms of pagan worship in his kingdom, especially the practices of the Assyrians. Although *Deuteronomy*, as we know it, is essentially a seventh-century creation, there is good reason to conclude it is based on sources that date from the time of Moses.

The setting of our excerpt is the frontier of Canaan, which the Israelites have reached after forty years of wandering in the desert. Moses, realizing he will die before his people cross the Jordan River into the Promised Land, delivers a final message to them.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. What is the Covenant between YHWH and the people of Israel? What does God promise and demand in return? What does YHWH threaten for those who break the Covenant?
2. Consider YHWH's promises again. What does YHWH have to say about rewards after death? What do you infer from your answer?
3. Which elements of Moses' message would the religious reformers of seventh-century Jerusalem wish to emphasize?
4. Compare the Ten Commandments with either the *Judgments of Hammurabi* or the Egyptian *The Negative Confession* (Chapter 1, sources 2 and 3). Which strike you as more significant, the similarities or the differences? What do you conclude from your answer?

And Moses summoned all Israel,¹ and said to them, "Hear, O Israel, the statutes and the ordinances which I speak in your hearing this day, and you shall learn them and be careful to do them. The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb.² Not with our fathers did the Lord make this covenant, but with us, who are

all of us here alive this day. The Lord spoke with you face to face at the mountain, out of the midst of the fire, while I stood between the Lord and you at that time, to declare to you the word of the Lord; for you were afraid because of the fire, and you did not go up into the mountain. He said:

¹The Hebrews referred to themselves as *Israel* and also as the *Children of Israel* and the *Israelites* because they traced their lineage to Jacob, whose name God had changed to Israel (God rules). Jacob, the grandson of Abraham and the

son of Isaac, had twelve sons, each of whom became the patriarch of one of the twelve tribes of the Children of Israel.

²Also known as *Mount Sinai*. Here Moses had received the Law from YHWH during the period of desert wandering.

"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

"You shall have no other gods before me.

"You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

"You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.

"Observe the sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work; but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, or your manservant, or your maidservant, or your ox, or your ass, or any of your cattle, or the sojourner who is within your gates, that your manservant and your maidservant may rest as well as you. You shall remember that you were a servant in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out thence with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the sabbath day.

"Honor your father and your mother, as the Lord your God commanded you; that your days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with you, in the land which the Lord your God gives you.

"You shall not kill.

"Neither shall you commit adultery.

"Neither shall you steal.

"Neither shall you bear false witness against your neighbor.

"Neither shall you covet your neighbor's wife; and you shall not desire your neighbor's house, his field, or his manservant, or his maidservant, his ox, or his ass, or anything that is your neighbor's."

"These words the Lord spoke to all your assembly at the mountain out of the midst of the fire, the cloud, and the thick darkness, with a loud voice; and he added no more. And he wrote them upon two tables of stone, and gave them to me. . . .

"Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the ordinances which the Lord your God commanded me to teach you, that you may do them in the land to which you are going over, to possess it; that you may fear the Lord your God, you and your son and your son's son, by keeping all his statutes and his commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life; and that your days may be prolonged. Hear therefore, O Israel, and be careful to do them; that it may go well with you, and that you may multiply greatly, as the Lord, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey.

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. And you shall bind them as frontlets between your eyes. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

"And when the Lord your God brings you into the land which he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you, with great and goodly cities, which you did not build, and houses full of all good things, which you did not fill, and cisterns hewn out, which you did not hew, and vineyards and olive trees, which you did not plant, and when you eat and are full, then take heed lest you forget the Lord, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall fear the Lord your God; you shall serve him, and swear by his name. You shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the peoples who are round about you; for the Lord your God in the midst of you is a jealous

God; lest the anger of the Lord your God be kindled against you, and he destroy you from off the face of the earth. . . .

“When the Lord your God brings you into the land which you are entering to take possession of it, and clears away many nations before you . . . seven nations greater and mightier than yourselves, and when the Lord your God gives them over to you, and you defeat them; then you must utterly destroy them; you shall make no covenant with them, and show no mercy to them. You shall not make marriages with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons. For they would turn away your sons from following me, to serve other gods; then the anger of the Lord would be kindled against you, and he would destroy you quickly. But thus shall you deal with them: you shall break down their altars, and dash in pieces their pillars, and hew down their Asherim,³ and burn their graven images with fire.

“For you are a people holy to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his own possession, out of all the peoples that are on the face of the earth. It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love upon you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples; but it is because the Lord loves you, and is keeping the oath which he swore to your fathers, that the Lord has brought you out with a

mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations, and repays those who hate him, by destroying them; he will not be slack with him who hates him. . . . You shall therefore be careful to do the commandments, and the statutes, and the ordinances, which I command you this day.

“And because you hearken to these ordinances, and keep and do them, the Lord your God will keep with you the covenant and the steadfast love which he swore to your fathers to keep; he will love you, bless you, and multiply you; he will also bless the fruit of your body and the fruit of your ground, your grain and your wine and your oil, the increase of your cattle and the young of your flock, in the land which he swore to your fathers to give you. You shall be blessed above all peoples; there shall not be male or female barren among you, or among your cattle. And the Lord will take away from you all sickness; and none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which you knew, will he inflict upon you, but he will lay them upon all who hate you. And you shall destroy all the peoples that the Lord your God will give over to you, your eye shall not pity them; neither shall you serve their gods, for that would be a snare to you.”

³Sacred poles raised to Astarte (or Asherah), the Canaanite counterpart of Ishtar, the Mesopotamian goddess of fertility and love (Chapter 1, source 1).

Keeping and Breaking the Covenant



15 ▼ THE BOOK OF JUDGES

According to the Bible, following Moses' death, Joshua led the Israelites into Canaan, where their first of many victories was the capture and destruction of Jericho and its populace. Archeological evidence, however, throws doubt on this exploit, inasmuch as the town had been destroyed quite a bit earlier, and the site appears to have been unoccupied in the thirteenth and twelfth centuries B.C.E., the presumed time frame in which these new Semitic settlers were filtering into

the region. Whatever the details of the Hebrews' migration into and settlement of Canaan might be, it is significant that an Egyptian inscription dating from around 1207 names *Israel* as an identifiable group residing in Syria-Palestine.

However they came in and at whatever pace, the Israelites were unable to wipe out or displace all of the indigenous peoples whom they found there. So the Israelites first settled in the hills, leaving the lowlands to others. According to the Bible, between Joshua's death, which tradition places around 1150 B.C.E., and the rise of the kingdom of Israel around 1050 B.C.E., various leaders known as *judges* arose to lead the Israelites in times of crisis, especially when one or more of their many neighbors threatened to overwhelm them. These leaders were not judges in a narrow juridical sense but men and women who were defenders of YHWH's law and justice.

The following story from the Bible's Book of Judges tells why the first of these judges, Othniel, was called to lead Israel. The book, which is based on a cycle of epics that date to around 1000 B.C.E., was probably put into its final form by the same group of seventh-century reformers in Jerusalem who were recasting Deuteronomy.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. In what ways did the Israelites break the Covenant, and what were the consequences?
2. What was the message or lesson to be learned from this experience?
3. How does that message relate to the theme of Moses' address to the Israelites (source 14)?
4. What does this source suggest about the historical realities of the Israelites' experience in the Promised Land?
5. What do you think happened after Othniel died?
6. Compare the troubles of the Israelites with the fall of the Xia and Shang dynasties in China as recorded in *The Classic of History* (Chapter 1, source 5). In what ways do these two explanations of history, the Mandate of Heaven and the Covenant, parallel one another? In what ways do they differ? Which are more significant, the similarities or the differences? What do you conclude from your answer?

When Joshua dismissed the people, the people of Israel went each to his inheritance to take possession of the land. And the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great work which the Lord had done for Israel. And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of

the Lord, died. . . . And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers; and there arose another generation after them, who did not know the Lord or the work which he had done for Israel.

And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals;¹ and they forsook the Lord, the God of their fathers,

¹Baal was the chief Canaanite god. Here, however, the term means "all the gods of the native peoples of the region."

who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; they went after other gods, from among the gods of the peoples who were round about them, and bowed down to them; and they provoked the Lord to anger. They forsook the Lord, and served the Baals and the Ashtaroth.² So the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he gave them over to plunderers, who plundered them; and he sold them into the power of their enemies round about, so that they could no longer withstand their enemies. Whenever they marched out, the hand of the Lord was against them for evil, as the Lord had warned, and as the Lord had sworn to them; and they were in sore straits.

Then the Lord raised up judges, who saved them out of the power of those who plundered them. And yet they did not listen to their judges; for they played the harlot after other gods and bowed down to them; they soon turned aside from the way in which their fathers had walked, who had obeyed the commandments of the Lord, and they did not do so. Whenever the Lord raised up judges for them, the Lord was with the judge, and he saved them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for the Lord was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who afflicted and oppressed them. But whenever the judge died, they turned back and behaved worse than their fathers, going after other gods, serving them and bowing down to them; they did not drop any of their practices or their stubborn ways. So the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel; and he said, "Because this people have transgressed my covenant which I commanded their fathers, and have not obeyed my voice, I will not henceforth drive out before them any of the nations that Joshua left when he died, that by them I may test Israel, whether

they will take care to walk in the way of the Lord as their fathers did, or not." So the Lord left those nations, not driving them out at once, and he did not give them into the power of Joshua.

Now these are the nations which the Lord left, to test Israel by them, that is, all in Israel who had no experience of any war in Canaan; it was only that the generations of the people of Israel might know war, that he might teach war to such at least as had not known it before. These are the nations: the five lords of the Philistines, and all the Canaanites, and the Sidonians, and the Hivites. . . . They were for the testing of Israel, to know whether Israel would obey the commandments of the Lord, which he commanded their fathers by Moses. So the people of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; and they took their daughters to themselves for wives, and their own daughters they gave to their sons; and they served their gods.

And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, forgetting the Lord their God, and serving the Baals and the Asheroth. Therefore the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of Cushanrishathaim³ king of Mesopotamia and the people of Israel served Cushanrishathaim eight years. But when the people of Israel cried to the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer for the people of Israel, who delivered them, Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. The Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he judged Israel; he went out to war, and the Lord gave Cushanrishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand; and his hand prevailed over Cushanrishathaim. So the land had rest forty years. Then Othniel the son of Kenaz died.

²See source 14, note 3. The phrase, in this context, means all the native gods, not just Baal and Astarte.

³A king who held major portions of Syria.

Chapter 3

Transcendental Reality

Developing the Spiritual Traditions
of India and Southwest Asia:
800–200 B.C.E.

Between about 800 and 200 B.C.E. profound changes in thought, belief, social organization, and government took place in China, India, Southwest Asia, and *Hellas* (the land of the Greeks). So pivotal were these changes, some historians favor calling this era the *Axial Age*. During these six centuries the Chinese, Indians, Southwest Asians, and *Hellenes* (the name by which the Greeks of classical antiquity identified themselves) formulated distinctive traditions and institutions that became essential features of their civilizations. In essence, their classical cultures took shape.

These developments became especially pronounced during the sixth century B.C.E. and following. It is no coincidence that Confucius, the Buddha, the Mahavira, several authors of the Upanishads, Second Isaiah, and the earliest Greek scientists and philosophers all lived during or around the sixth century. Moreover, the Hindu caste system was in place and the Persian Empire and the Hellenic city-states were thriving by the end of this century.

What accounts for these parallel developments? The *Age of Iron*, which began after about 1000 B.C.E., witnessed the development of considerably larger, more complex, and more competitive political and economic entities that challenged older social systems and values. This disruption of life was unsettling and led to the search for answers to some fundamental questions: What are the meaning and goal of life? How does one relate to the spiritual world? To the natural world? To other humans? What is the ideal government?

The historical frameworks of the various civilizations posing such questions often differed radically. Their respective

answers consequently varied significantly. In one way, however, they displayed a striking similarity. Each emerging tradition challenged the myth-making notion that humankind is held hostage by a capricious, god-infested nature.

Indian thinkers did this by denying that the tangible world of observable nature is real in any meaningful sense and seeking, instead, reality in the transcendental world of the spirit. China witnessed several other approaches. One school of thought — *Daoism* — sought mystical union with nature; two other schools — *Confucianism* and *Legalism* — sought to control nature by imposing human discipline upon it. Whereas Confucians saw the solution in a moral order of virtuous behavior, Legalists found it in the order of strict and dispassionately applied human law. In Southwest Asia freedom from myth-laden nature was partially achieved through worship of and obedience to a totally spiritual yet personal God of the universe, who stood completely outside nature yet imposed moral order upon it. In Hellas the attempt to master nature took the form of rational philosophy and science. Here certain thinkers sought to control nature by studying it objectively, thereby discovering laws that would enable humans to define more surely their place in the universe. In this manner, four major world traditions emerged: Indian transcendental spirituality; China's distinctive blend of practical worldliness with a mystical appreciation of nature; Southwest Asia's preoccupation with ethical monotheism; and Greek rationalism, with its special focus on the human condition.

In this chapter we shall explore the spiritual and religious traditions that took shape in India and Southwest Asia. Religion has played a central role in human history, especially in the region of southern Asia that stretches from Syria-Palestine in the west to the Bay of Bengal in the east. This vast area, which encompasses all of Southwest Asia and the whole Indian subcontinent, has been the birthplace of most of the world's major religions. Time and again we shall return to this region of the world to marvel at its spiritual fertility. For the present we focus on the emergence of two major spiritual traditions. The first was a world- and self-denying transcendentalism that took shape in India. Its most classic expressions were *Brabminical Hinduism*, *Jainism*, and *Buddhism*. All three sprang out of a common Indian notion that true peace and bliss do not lie in the momentary pleasures that come from satisfying the illusory desires of this world. Rather, lasting tranquility comes only with the discovery of

Immutable Reality through a radical transformation of one's self. The second major religious tradition of southern Asia was the concept of a single, sole God of the universe. This God is transcendental, existing totally outside of time, space, and matter, all of which are this deity's creations. But this Universal God is also a personal, caring deity who directs human history and uses humans as historical agents. Moreover, this God demands a high degree of moral behavior from those called to divine service because by directing human history, God has sanctified it. This notion, which we term *ethical monotheism*, found its origins in Persia's *Zoroastrianism* and Israel's *Judaism*.

The Emergence of Brahminical Hinduism

Religion for the early Aryans of India, as was also true for the early Greeks and Persians, centered on the sacrifice by fire of animals, especially horses and cattle. Chanting ritual hymns, which were later preserved in the four great vedic collections, Aryan priests, known as *Brahmins*, offered these sacrifices in the hope of winning the favor of the gods, especially Indra (Chapter 2, source 11). As important as the Brahmins were, however, early Aryan society appears to have been led by its warriors. Yet by the time of the composition of the *Rig Veda*'s "Hymn to Purusha," the Brahmins, who composed and recited the hymn, claimed a position of primacy over the other three classes: *Rajanyas* or *Kshatriyas* (rulers and warriors); *Vaisyas* (workers); and *Sudras* (slaves and servants). This claim did not go uncontested by the Kshatriyas, and for many centuries both classes jockeyed for leadership. In the end the Brahmins won out, and their victory was manifested in a uniquely Indian religious-social system known as *caste*.

The Sanskrit term for caste is *varna*, which means "color," and might derive from the Aryans' early attempt to distinguish themselves from the darker-skinned natives of the subcontinent. It seems likely that initially the Aryans relegated these much-despised *Dasas* (slaves) to the fourth and lowest class — the Sudras — although over time many members of the native upper classes were incorporated into the higher strata of the Indo-Aryan World. Whatever its origins, sometime in the course of the so-called Axial Age, *varna* came to mean the four immutable groups of humanity that inhabited the *Hindu* (Indian) World, and at the top of this hierarchy stood the Brahmins. The four traditional Indo-Aryan classes were now castes, and strict rules codified each one. Castes became hereditary and permanent, with few exceptions, and they defined the most intimate aspects of each member's life. What was more important, caste defined one's place in the painful cycle of rebirth (*samsara*) as each soul journeyed from incarnation to incarnation in search of release (*moksha*) and return to the World Soul (*Brahman*). Needless to say, male Brahmins stood at the doorstep of release because of the merits of their previous lives that had brought them this far. With

the evolution of caste, which in itself is based on the belief that the tangible world is a shadow of the true world of the spirit, *Brahminical Hinduism* had arrived, at least in its early stages of evolution.

On one level Hinduism can be defined as the entire body of Indian religious beliefs and ways of life that are centered on a caste system in which Brahmins hold the most exalted position. Yet, on a more profound level Hinduism defies all attempts at simple definition. In fact, it is wrong to think of it, either today or several thousand years ago, as a single set of beliefs and practices. To the contrary, it is and always has been a fluid mass of religious and social expressions. It encompasses archaic folk rituals and the most abstract and speculative thought on the nature of Divine Reality. Although Brahmins constitute its priestly caste, historically its great *gurus*, or religious teachers, have come from all castes and walks of life. It is both polytheistic and monotheistic. It has thousands of gods and goddesses, but it also focuses on Brahman, the True One — limitless Divine Reality. One deity can have countless manifestations, but all the deities are manifestations of the One. Because Divine Reality is without bounds, Hindu religious expression is simultaneously earthy and metaphysical, and both erotic sexuality and extreme asceticism are equally valid religious traditions. More than a single religion, it is a family of connected religions that encompasses the living faiths of all the diverse peoples of India who call themselves Hindu, or Indian. Indeed, Hindus can choose from an apparently endless variety of beliefs and modes of worship because one of the key religious insights of Hinduism is that *there are an infinite number of paths to and manifestations of the limitless One*. Consequently, Hindus do not believe that the fullness of religious truth can be summed up in a neat package of doctrinal statements, nor do they believe that religion consists of a clear-cut struggle of truth versus error, good versus evil. The notion that a thing either is or is not, but cannot be both, has no place in a Hindu world where countless apparent contradictions exist comfortably alongside one another.

The Hindu Search for Divine Reality



16 ▼ THE UPANISHADS

Despite the growing importance of the Brahmins, between roughly 700 and 500 B.C.E., a number of religious revolutionaries in the region of northeast India's Ganges Plain, the new demographic and cultural center of the subcontinent, created a form of spiritual literature known as the *Upanishads*.

Upanishad means "sitting down in front [of a teacher]," and these texts take the form of dialogues between teachers and pupils who seek to go beyond the Vedas in their search for ultimate wisdom. Many of the authors were probably Brahmins, but it seems clear that just as many, if not more, were Kshatriyas, which reflects not only a continuing struggle for supremacy between the two castes but also a discontentment by many Brahmins, as well as Kshatriyas, with what they perceived to be the empty formalism of brahminical rituals.

Without rejecting the ancient Vedas and brahminical sacrifices or the far-more-recent and still-evolving caste system, the upanishadic teachers took certain

concepts that were implied in the later vedic hymns, such as the “Hymn to Purusha,” and articulated a vision of an all-inclusive Being, or Ultimate Reality, called *Brahman*. More than that, they articulated a way by which anyone, regardless of caste, could attain Brahman.

As we might expect, there is a good deal of contradiction among the 108 extant upanishadic texts, yet a fundamental message binds them: Not only is there a Universal Soul, or Brahman, but the innermost essence of a person, the *atman*, or spiritual self, is one with Brahman, the True Self. Humans, therefore, are not outside Divine Reality; they are part of it. Those who wish to throw off the painful bonds of rebirth and earthly nonreality must reach that divinity within themselves.

Our first selection, which comes from the early and especially revered *Chandogya Upanishad*, presents two analogies to explain this theological message. Here we meet the conceited youth Svetaketu, who thinks that he has mastered all that he needs to know in order to win release from the shackles of life’s cycle of suffering by virtue of his twelve-year apprenticeship with Brahmin priests, who have taught him all the sacred rituals. His father, however, teaches him an additional lesson: Reality transcends the world of tangible phenomena and, yet, is attainable. The second excerpt, taken from the later but equally important *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, deals with the issue of how that spark of Brahman, the Self, which is contained within each mortal body, migrates from one body to another until it finally achieves release and rejoins the One. Here we see an early enunciation of what are becoming two essential elements of Hindu religious thought: reincarnation and the law of *karma*, or the fruits of one’s actions (see also source 17). The third selection, also from the *Brihadaranyaka*, describes the state of consciousness of a person who is on the verge of attaining release from the cycle of rebirth and union with Brahman.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. What does the father mean when he states, “You, Svetaketu, are it”?
2. What is the law of karma?
3. Why are souls reincarnated, and how might one advance up the ladder of caste?
4. How does one end the cycle of rebirth?
5. How important or real is this world to the soul that is returning to Brahman?
6. Why do even good and evil cease to have meaning to the soul that has found Brahman?
7. Consider the closing lines of the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*. What hope does this text hold out to persons of the lowest castes and even to casteless untouchables?
8. How is the upanishadic vision of Brahman a logical development from the message of the “Hymn to Purusha”?

THE CHANDOGYA UPANISHAD

There lived once Svetaketu. . . . To him his father Uddalaka . . . said: "Svetaketu, go to school; for no one belonging to our race, dear son, who, not having studied, is, as it were, a Brahmin¹ by birth only."

Having begun his apprenticeship when he was twelve years of age, Svetaketu returned to his father, when he was twenty-four, having then studied all the Vedas, — conceited, considering himself well-read, and stern.

His father said to him: "Svetaketu, as you are so conceited, considering yourself so well-read, and so stern, my dear, have you ever asked for that instruction by which we hear what cannot be heard, by which we perceive what cannot be perceived, by which we know what cannot be known?"

"What is that instruction, Sir?" he asked. . . .

"Fetch me . . . a fruit of the Nyagrodha tree."

"Here is one, Sir."

"Break it."

"It is broken, Sir."

"What do you see there?"

"These seeds, almost infinitesimal."

"Break one of them."

"It is broken, Sir."

"What do you see there?"

"Not anything, Sir."

The father said: "My son, that subtle essence which you do not perceive there, of that very essence this great Nyagrodha tree exists.

"Believe it, my son. That which is the subtle essence, in it all that exists has its self. It is the True. It is the Self, and you, . . . Svetaketu, are it."

"Please, Sir, inform me still more," said the son.

"Be it so, my child," the father replied.

"Place this salt in water, and then wait on me in the morning."

The son did as he was commanded.

The father said to him: "Bring me the salt, which you placed in the water last night."

The son having looked for it, found it not, for, of course, it was melted.

The father said: "Taste it from the surface of the water. How is it?"

The son replied: "It is salt."

"Taste it from the middle. How is it?"

The son replied: "It is salt."

"Taste it from the bottom. How is it?"

The son replied: "It is salt."

The father said: "Throw it away and then wait on me."

He did so; but the salt exists forever.²

Then the father said: "Here also, in this body,³ . . . you do not perceive the True, my son; but there indeed it is.

"That which is the subtle essence,⁴ in it all that exists has its self. It is the True. It is the Self, and you, Svetaketu, are it."

THE BRIHADARANYAKA UPANISHAD

"And when the body grows weak through old age, or becomes weak through illness, at that time that person, after separating himself from his members, as a mango, or fig, or pippala-fruit is separated from the stalk,⁵ hastens back again as he came, to the place from which he started, to new life. . . .

"Then both his knowledge and his work take hold of him⁶ and his acquaintance with former things.⁷

¹Note that *Brahmin* is a male gender variation of the neuter noun *Brahman*.

²The salt, although invisible, remains forever in the water.

³The human body.

⁴The soul, or *atman*.

⁵The image is of a fruit that carries the seed of new life, even as it decays.

⁶The law of karma, which is defined more fully later in this source.

⁷One's acquaintance with things in a former life explains the peculiar talents and deficiencies evident in a child.

“And as a caterpillar, after having reached the end of a blade of grass, and after having made another approach to another blade, draws itself together towards it, thus does this Self, after having thrown off this body and dispelled all ignorance, and after making another approach to another body, draw himself together towards it.

“And as a goldsmith, taking a piece of gold, turns it into another, newer and more beautiful shape, so does this Self, after having thrown off this body and dispelled all ignorance, make unto himself another, newer and more beautiful shape. . . .

“Now as a man is like this or like that, according as he acts and according as he behaves, so will he be: — a man of good acts will become good, a man of bad acts, bad. He becomes pure by pure deeds, bad by bad deeds.

“And here they say that a person consists of desires. And as is his desire, so is his will; and as is his will, so is his deed; and whatever deed he does, that he will reap.

“And here there is this verse: ‘To whatever object a man’s own mind is attached, to that he goes strenuously together with his deed; and having obtained the consequences of whatever deed he does here on earth, he returns again from that world . . . to this world of action.’⁸

⁸This is the law of karma, which means “action.”

⁹By discovering and becoming one with that spark of Brahman within, the person ends the painful cycle of samsara.

¹⁰*Kandalas* were the lowest of all casteless persons. Beneath the lowly Sudra stood certain casteless persons whose inherited occupations, or subcastes (*jatis*), rendered them “un-

“So much for the man who desires. But as to the man who does not desire, who, not desiring, freed from desires, is satisfied in his desires, or desires the Self only, his vital spirits do not depart elsewhere, — being Brahman, he goes to Brahman.”⁹

“On this there is this verse: ‘When all desires which once entered his heart are undone, then does the mortal become immortal, then he obtains Brahman.’”

▼ ▼ ▼

“Now as a man, when embraced by a beloved wife, knows nothing that is without, nothing that is within, thus this person, when embraced by the intelligent Self, knows nothing that is without, nothing that is within. This indeed is his true form, in which his wishes are fulfilled, in which the Self only is his wish, in which no wish is left, — free from any sorrow.

“Then a father is not a father, a mother not a mother, the worlds not worlds, the gods not gods, the Vedas not Vedas. Then a thief is not a thief, a murderer not a murderer, a Kandala not a Kandala,¹⁰ a Sramana not a Sramana,¹¹ a Tapasa not a Tapasa.¹² He is not followed by good, not followed by evil, for he has then overcome all the sorrows of the heart.”

clean.” (See Chapter 5, sources 38 and 39, for additional sources and notes that deal with the Kandalas and other subcastes.)

¹¹A holy beggar.

¹²A person performing penance.

Dharma: The Imperative of Caste Law



17 ▼ THE BHAGAVAD GITA

The upanishadic texts offer one *yoga* (pathway of discipline) to total detachment from this world and, therefore, release: the *Yoga of Knowledge*, by which the atman acquires the sure knowledge of its own divinity. The *Bhagavad Gita* (*Song of the Blessed Lord*), Hinduism’s most beloved sacred text, offers several others, of which we shall, at this time, consider only one: the *Yoga of Action*, by which one detaches oneself from this world through selfless devotion to caste duties (see Chapter 6, sources 42 and 43, for the *Yoga of Devotion*).

The *Gita* appears as an interjected episode in the *Mahabharata* (*The Great Deeds of the Bharata Clan*), the world's longest epic poem. Like the Homeric Greek epics, the *Mahabharata* is ascribed to a single legendary poet, Vyasa. In fact, however, it was the work of many authors over an extensive period of time, from perhaps 500 B.C.E. to possibly 400 C.E. Also like the Homeric epics, the *Mahabharata* deals on one level with the clash of armies and the combat of individual heroes, and simultaneously on a higher plane it expounds theological and philosophical insights. Among all of these spiritual interjections, the *Bhagavad Gita* is the most profound.

Younger than most of the epic into which it was placed, the *Gita*'s date of final composition is uncertain; scholars fix it anywhere between 300 B.C.E. and 300 C.E. Whatever its date, Hindu commentators have consistently considered the song to be the last and greatest of the upanishadic texts, for they see it as the crystallization of all that was expressed and implied in the upanishadic tradition.

The core question addressed in the *Bhagavad Gita* is how a person can become one with Brahman, while still functioning in this world. Answers to that primary quest of Hindu theology come from Lord *Krishna*, the incarnation of *Vishnu*, the Divine Preserver. In this particular corporeal form, or *avatara*, Krishna/Vishnu serves as charioteer to the warrior-hero *Arjuna*. Arjuna, son of a mortal mother and the god Indra, is a fearless warrior, but he shrinks from entering battle because his foes are his kinsmen. Overcome by a sense of the futility of this fratricidal war and overwhelmed by compassion, he wants no part in creating more suffering. The hero-god Krishna then proceeds to resolve Arjuna's quandary by explaining to him the moral imperative of caste-duty, or *dharmā*.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. Why should Arjuna not grieve for those whom he might kill?
2. Why should one perform one's caste-duty in a totally disinterested fashion?
3. According to Krishna, what constitutes sin? What is evil?
4. What hope, if any, does this theological message hold out to the lowest elements of Hindu society?
5. In what ways is Krishna's message the same as that of the Upanishads?

The deity said, you have grieved for those who deserve no grief. . . . Learned men grieve not for the living nor the dead. Never did I not exist, nor you, nor these rulers of men; nor will any one of us ever hereafter cease to be. As in this body, infancy and youth and old age come to the embodied self, so does the acquisition of another body; a sensible man is not deceived about that.

The contacts of the senses, O son of Kunti!¹ which produce cold and heat, pleasure and pain, are not permanent, they are ever coming and going. Bear them, O descendant of Bharata!² For, O chief of men! that sensible man whom they (pain and pleasure being alike to him) afflict not, he merits immortality. There is no existence for that which is unreal; there is no non-existence for that

¹The secondary name of Arjuna's mother (see note 4).

²King Bharata was the ancestor from whom Arjuna and his foes were descended.

which is real. And the correct conclusion about both is perceived by those who perceive the truth. Know that to be indestructible which pervades all this. . . . He who thinks it³ to be the killer and he who thinks it to be killed, both know nothing. It kills not, is not killed. It is not born, nor does it ever die, nor, having existed, does it exist no more. Unborn, everlasting, unchangeable, and primeval, it is not killed when the body is killed. O son of Pritha!⁴ how can that man who knows it thus to be indestructible, everlasting, unborn, and inexhaustible, how and whom can he kill, whom can he cause to be killed? As a man, casting off old clothes, puts on others and new ones, so the embodied self casting off old bodies, goes to others and new ones. . . . It is everlasting, all-pervading, stable, firm, and eternal. It is said to be unperceived, to be unthinkable, to be unchangeable. Therefore knowing it to be such, you ought not to grieve. But even if you think that it is constantly born, and constantly dies, still, O you of mighty arms! you ought not to grieve thus. For to one that is born, death is certain; and to one that dies, birth is certain. . . . This embodied self, O descendant of Bharata! within every one's body is ever indestructible. Therefore you ought not to grieve for any being. Having regard to your own duty also, you ought not to falter, for there is nothing better for a Kshatriya than a righteous battle. Happy those Kshatriyas, O son of Pritha! who can find such a battle . . . an open door to heaven! But if you will not fight this righteous battle, then you will have abandoned your own duty and your fame, and you will incur sin. . . . Your business is with action alone; not by any means with fruit. Let not the fruit of action be your motive to action. Let not your attachment be fixed on inaction. Having recourse to devotion . . . perform

actions, casting off all attachment, and being equable in success or ill-success; such equability is called devotion. . . . The wise who have obtained devotion cast off the fruit of action,⁵ and released from the shackles of repeated births, repair to that seat where there is no unhappiness. . . . The man who, casting off all desires, lives free from attachments, who is free from egoism, and from the feeling that this or that is mine, obtains tranquility. This, O son of Pritha! is the Brahmic state; attaining to this, one is never deluded; and remaining in it in one's last moments, one attains the Brahmic bliss.⁶ . . .

I have passed through many births, O Arjuna! and you also. I know them all, but you, O terror of your foes! do not know them. Even though I am unborn and inexhaustible in my essence, even though I am lord of all beings, still I am born by means of my delusive power. Whensoever, O descendant of Bharata! piety languishes, and impiety is in the ascendant, I create myself. I am born age after age, for the protection of the good, for the destruction of evil-doers, and the establishment of piety. . . . The fourfold division of castes was created by me according to the appointment of qualities and duties. . . . The duties of Brahmins, Kshatriyas, and Vaisyas, and of Sudras, too, O terror of your foes! are distinguished according to the qualities born of nature.⁷ Tranquility, restraint of the senses, penance, purity, forgiveness, straightforwardness, also knowledge, experience, and belief in a future world, this is the natural duty of Brahmins. Valor, glory, courage, dexterity, not slinking away from battle, gifts, exercise of lordly power, this is the natural duty of Kshatriyas. Agriculture, tending cattle, trade, this is the natural duty of Vaisyas. And the natural duty of Sudras, too, consists in service. Every man intent on his own

³The atman, or individual soul, and Brahman, which are one and the same (see source 16).

⁴The primary name of Arjuna's mother (see note 1).

⁵They do not concern themselves with the earthly consequences of their actions and develop no attachments to the rewards of this world (fame, wealth, family) that might result from those actions.

⁶*Brahma-nirvana*, or merging with Brahman and release

(*moksha*) from the cycle of rebirth. It is a state of simultaneous being and nonbeing.

⁷Each caste consists of persons born to that station by virtue of their nature. Each person's karma has made that person's nature suitable for a particular caste and only that caste. Brahmins teach and offer sacrifices; Kshatriyas rule and fight; Vaisyas work; and Sudras serve (see Chapter 2, source 11, and Chapter 5, source 38).

respective duties obtains perfection. Listen, now, how one intent on one's own duty obtains perfection. Worshiping, by the performance of his own duty, him from whom all things proceed, and by whom all this is permeated, a man obtains perfection. One's duty, though defective, is better than another's duty well performed. Performing the duty prescribed by nature, one does not incur sin. O son of Kunti! one should not abandon a natural duty though tainted with evil; for all actions are enveloped by evil, as fire by smoke. One who is self-restrained, whose understanding is unattached everywhere, from whom affections have departed, obtains the supreme perfection of freedom from action by renuncia-

tion. Learn from me, only in brief, O son of Kunti! how one who has obtained perfection attains the Brahman, which is the highest culmination of knowledge. A man possessed of a pure understanding, controlling his self by courage, discarding sound and other objects of sense, casting off affection and aversion; who frequents clean places, who eats little, whose speech, body, and mind are restrained, who is always intent on meditation and mental abstraction, and has recourse to unconcern, who abandoning egoism, stubbornness, arrogance, desire, anger, and all belongings, has no thought that this or that is mine, and who is tranquil, becomes fit for assimilation with the Brahman.

Challengers of Caste: The Mahavira and the Buddha

By 600 B.C.E. the central spiritual question in Indian society was how to find liberation from karma and the painful cycle of rebirth. As we have seen, the upanishadic teachers and the *Bhagavad Gita* offered different but complementary answers, and both sources of wisdom held out the possibility that anyone, regardless of caste, could find release in the present life by achieving a state of absolute selflessness. Regardless of these proffered avenues, the steady entrenchment of castes does not seem to have been retarded, and by about 300 B.C.E. the caste system was well established throughout most of Indian society. Moreover, there was a fairly widespread consensus — at least among the brahminical teachers — that conformity to one's dharma, no matter how lacking in perfect selflessness it might be, and slow karmic progress up the chain of caste through a series of reincarnations were the dual keys to release from the bonds of matter. However, some spiritual teachers were offering avenues to liberation that challenged the entire caste system.

Even as the Brahmin class was in the process of becoming the dominant Hindu caste and defining what would become mainstream Hinduism, several teachers emerged from the Kshatriya class to offer alternatives to the caste system. One of these was *Nataputta Vardhamana*, known to history as the *Mahavira* (the Great Hero) and also as the *Jina* (the Conqueror). The other was *Siddhartha Gautama*, better known as the *Buddha* (the Enlightened One).

Each teacher and his doctrine is understandable only within the context of a Hindu cosmology. Although both formulated philosophies that denied certain concepts basic to what was emerging as classical Brahminical Hinduism, the

questions each asked and the answers each offered were predicated upon the world-denying assumptions underlying all Indian spiritual thought.

Ironically, although both doctrines began as philosophies in which divinities played no significant role, they became in time theistic (god-centered) religions. *Jainism*, or the teachings of the Jina, would win adherents only in India and Ceylon, but it has survived to the present as a small but important sect within Hinduism. On its part, *Buddhism* expanded well beyond the boundaries of Hinduism. Half a millennium after the Buddha's release from the bonds of matter, his teachings had been transformed into a family of related religions, many of which worshiped the Buddha himself as a divine being. For well over two thousand years, Buddhism in its various forms has profoundly shaped the lives of countless devotees throughout South and East Asia and remains a vital religious force today.

A Call to the Heroic Life



18 ▼ *THE BOOK OF GOOD CONDUCT*

Our picture of Nataputta Vardhamana, who became the Mahavira and the Jina, is quite hazy, in large part because the earliest written sources for the Great Hero's life and doctrine date no earlier than two centuries after his death, and possibly quite a bit later. Tradition dates his life to the period ca. 599–527 B.C.E., but traditional dates can be quite wrong. Tradition also places him into the Kshatriya caste.

One of the chief sources for the life, legend, and teachings of the Mahavira is the *Acaranga Sutra* (*The Book of Good Conduct*), which Jains revere as the first of their eleven major sacred texts. Here we encounter reincarnation, karma, and dharma, but with a Jain twist, and we discover Jain *ahimsa*, or absolute nonviolence toward all life. Our first excerpt defines dharma as understood by Jains; the second tells how the Jina conquered karma; and the third outlines the five great vows of Jainism.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. What is dharma, according to Jain teachings?
2. What is the Jain definition of karma?
3. What did the Jina seek to conquer?
4. Compare Jain notions of dharma and karma with those of mainstream Brahminical Hinduism. Compare Jain notions of sin and evil with those articulated in the *Bribadaranyaka Upanishad* and the *Bhagavad Gita*. Which strike you as more significant, the differences or the similarities? What do you conclude from this analysis?
5. Both Lord Krishna and the Mahavira teach a doctrine of nonattachment to this world. How do their teachings parallel one another? Where do they

diverge? Which are more significant, the similarities or the differences?
What do you conclude from this analysis?

The Arhats¹ . . . of the past, present, and future, all say thus, speak thus, declare thus, explain thus: all breathing, existing, living, sentient creatures² should not be slain, nor treated with violence, nor abused, nor tormented, nor driven away.

This is the pure, unchangeable, eternal law [dharma], which the clever ones, who understand the world, have declared: among the zealous and the not zealous, among the faithful and the not faithful, among the not cruel and the cruel, among those who have worldly weakness and those who have not, among those who like social bonds and those who do not: "that is the truth, that is so, that is proclaimed in this."

Having adopted the law, one should not hide it, nor forsake it. Correctly understanding the law, one should arrive at indifference for the impressions of the senses, and "not act on the motives of the world." "He who is not of this mind, how should he come to the other?"³

▼ ▼ ▼

Beings which are born in all states become individually sinners by their actions.⁴

The Venerable One⁵ understands thus: he who is under the conditions of existence, that fool suffers pain. Thoroughly knowing karma, the Venerable One avoids sin.

The sage, perceiving the double karma,⁶ proclaims the incomparable activity,⁷ he, the know-

ing one; knowing the current of worldliness, the current of sinfulness, and the impulse.

Practicing the sinless abstinence from killing, he⁸ did no acts, neither himself nor with the assistance of others; he to whom women were known as the causes of all sinful acts, he saw the true state of the world. . . .

He well saw that bondage comes through action. Whatever is sinful, the Venerable One left that undone: he consumed clean food.⁹

Knowing measure in eating and drinking, he was not desirous of delicious food, nor had he a longing for it. . . .

The Venerable One, exerting himself, did not seek sleep for the sake of pleasure; he waked up himself, and slept only a little, free from desires. . . .

Always well guarded, he bore the pains caused by grass, cold, fire, flies, and gnats; manifold pains.

He traveled in the pathless country of the Ladhas.¹⁰ . . .

In Ladha natives attacked him; the dogs bit him, ran at him.

Few people kept off the attacking, biting dogs. . . .

Such were the inhabitants. Many other mendicants,¹¹ eating rough food . . . and carrying about a strong pole [to keep off the dogs], . . . lived there.

Even thus armed they were bitten by the dogs, torn by the dogs. It is difficult to travel in Ladha.

¹Perfect souls, or saints, who are worthy of absolute reverence because their holiness places them on the verge of release from the bonds of matter. (See source 19, note 15, and source 20, note 6.)

²Not only the higher forms of sentient life, such as humans and animals, but also insects, plants, seeds, lichens, and even beings known as *earth bodies*, *wind bodies*, *water bodies*, and *fire bodies*.

³How is it possible for a person to sin ("come to the other") who does not "act on the motives of the world"?

⁴The law of karma as understood by Jains.

⁵The Mahavira.

⁶The present and the future.

⁷The life of the true Jain.

⁸The Mahavira.

⁹Food that does the absolute minimum violence to sentient life in all its forms.

¹⁰Possibly western Bengal.

¹¹Wandering holy people who beg for their food (see source 20).

Ceasing to use the stick against living beings, abandoning the care of the body, the houseless, the Venerable One endures the thorns of the villages being perfectly enlightened.

As an elephant at the head of the battle, so was Mahavira there victorious. . . .

The Venerable One was able to abstain from indulgence of the flesh. . . .

Purgatives and emetics, anointing of the body and bathing, shampooing and cleansing of the teeth do not behoove him, after he learned [that the body is something unclean]. . . .

In summer he exposes himself to the heat, he sits squatting in the sun; he lives on rough food: rice, pounded jujube, and beans. . . .

Sometimes the Venerable One did not drink for half a month or even for a month.

Or he did not drink for more than two months, or even six months, day and night, without desire for drink. Sometimes he ate stale food. . . .

Having wisdom, Mahavira committed no sin himself, nor did he induce others to do so, nor did he consent to the sins of others.

Having entered a village or a town, he begged for food which had been prepared for somebody else. Having got clean food, he used it, restraining the impulses. . . . The Venerable One slowly wandered about, and, killing no creatures, he begged for his food.

Moist or dry or cold food, old beans, old pap, or bad grain, whether he did or did not get such food he was rich. . . .

Himself understanding the truth and restraining the impulses for the purification of the soul, finally liberated, and free from delusion, the Venerable One was well guarded during his whole life.

The Venerable Ascetic¹² Mahavira endowed with the highest knowledge and intuition taught the five great vows.

▼ ▼ ▼

The first great vow, Sir, runs thus:

I renounce all killing of living beings, whether subtle or gross, whether movable or immovable. Nor shall I myself kill living beings, nor cause others to do it, nor consent to it. As long as I live, I confess and blame, repent and exempt myself of these sins, in the thrice threefold way,¹³ in mind, speech, and body. . . .

The second great vow runs thus:

I renounce all vices of lying speech arising from anger or greed or fear or mirth. I shall neither myself speak lies, nor cause others to speak lies, nor consent to the speaking of lies by others. . . .

The third great vow runs thus:

I renounce all taking of anything not given,¹⁴ either in a village or a town or a wood, either of little or much, of small or great, of living or lifeless things. I shall neither take myself what is not given, nor cause others to take it, nor consent to their taking it.

The fourth great vow runs thus:

I renounce all sexual pleasures, either with gods or men or animals. I shall not give way to sensuality. . . .

The fifth great vow runs thus:

I renounce all attachments, whether little or much, small or great, living or lifeless; neither shall I myself form such attachments, nor cause others to do so, nor consent to their doing so.

¹²A person who leads a life of rigorous self-denial for spiritual reasons.

¹³Acting, commanding, or consenting in mind, speech, or body, in the past, present, or future.

¹⁴The Jain must live as a beggar.

The Path to Enlightenment



19 ▼ *The Buddha, TWO LESSONS*

Many parallels exist between the legendary lives of the Mahavira and the Buddha, and several of their teachings are strikingly similar. Each rejected the sanctity of vedic literature; each spurned the religious ceremonies and authority of the Brahmins; and each denied the meaningfulness of all caste distinctions and duties. Yet a close examination of their doctrines reveals substantial differences.

Like the Mahavira, most details of the Buddha's life are uncertain. Unanimous tradition places Siddhartha Gautama's birth into a princely family residing in the Himalayan foothills of Nepal, but the written sources for his life and teachings, all of which were composed long after his time, differ as to his birth and death dates; the three strongest traditions are 624–544, 563–483, and 448–368 B.C.E. Significantly, all three agree that he lived to the age of eighty. Also like the Mahavira, tradition holds that the young prince, shrinking in horror at the many manifestations of misery in this world, fled his comfortable life and became an ascetic. Unlike the Mahavira, who found victory over karma in severe self-denial and total nonviolence, Prince Gautama found only severe disquiet. The ascetic life offered him no enlightenment as to how one might escape the sorrows of mortal existence. After abandoning extreme asceticism, Gautama achieved Enlightenment in a flash while meditating under a sacred pipal tree (see Chapter 1, source 8, seal 3). He was now the Buddha, the Enlightened One.

Legend tells us he then proceeded to share the path to Enlightenment, which he termed the *Middle Path*, by preaching a sermon in a deer park at Benares in northeastern India to five ascetics, who became his first disciples. Buddhists refer to that initial sermon as “Setting in Motion the Wheel of the Law,” which means that the Buddha had embarked on a journey (turning the wheel) on behalf of the Law of Righteousness (Dharma).

Our first text is a reconstruction of that sermon. The second document is a dialogue between the Buddha and one of his disciples. Known as “The Lesson on Questions That Tend Not to Edification,” it deals with issues on which the Buddha refused to speculate.

Both sources are preserved in a body of Buddhist literature known as the *Pali Canon*, which contains the most authentic texts relating to the Buddha and his doctrine known to exist today. Assembled as an authoritative collection, or *canon*, of orally transmitted remembrances during the period between the Buddha's death and the late third century B.C.E., the texts were probably not written down in the form in which we have them until the late first century B.C.E. Composed in Pali, a language that is close to classical Sanskrit, they first appeared in the island of Ceylon (modern Sri Lanka) and traveled from there to Burma and Thailand, where they became the core canonical books of the branch of Buddhism known as *Theravada* (see Chapter 6). Each text is located in one of three groupings, or “baskets,” a designation whose origin traces back to a time when the palm-leaf manuscripts of the texts were kept in three separate baskets. For this reason the entire

collection is known as the *Tipitaka*, or *Three Baskets*. Our first document comes from *The Discipline Basket*, which consists of a number of books that concern the discipline, or regimented life, of Buddhist monks and nuns. The second source comes from *The Basket of Discourses*, which contains a series of books that supposedly contain all of the Buddha's sermons and lessons.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. What is the Middle Path? Why is it, according to the Buddha, the proper path to Enlightenment?
2. What are the *Four Noble Truths*, and how does one's total comprehension and acceptance of them lead to *Nirvana*, or escape from the cycle of suffering?
3. Buddhists call the law taught by the Buddha *Dharma*. How does Buddhist Dharma differ from that of Brahminical Hinduism?
4. What issues or questions did the Buddha refuse to consider? Why? What does his refusal to speculate on these issues suggest about his doctrine?
5. What assumptions and values do Brahminical Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism share? Where do they differ? Which are more significant, the similarities or the differences? What conclusions follow from your answers?

SETTING IN MOTION THE WHEEL OF THE LAW

And the Blessed One thus addressed the five Bhikkhus.¹ "There are two extremes, O Bhikkhus, which he who has given up the world ought to avoid. What are these two extremes? A life given to pleasures, devoted to pleasures and lusts: this is degrading, sensual, vulgar, ignoble, and profitless; and a life given to mortifications: this is painful, ignoble, and profitless. By avoiding these two extremes, O Bhikkhus, the Tathagata²

has gained the knowledge of the Middle Path which leads to insight, which leads to wisdom, which conduces to calm, to knowledge, to the Sambodhi,³ to Nirvana.⁴

"Which, O Bhikkhus, is this Middle Path the knowledge of which the Tathagata has gained, which leads to insight, which leads to wisdom, which conduces to calm, to knowledge, to the Sambodhi, to Nirvana? It is the Holy Eightfold Path, namely, Right Belief,⁵ Right Aspiration,⁶ Right Speech,⁷ Right Conduct,⁸ Right Means of Livelihood,⁹ Right Endeavor,¹⁰ Right Memory,¹¹

¹Ascetics. The term later was used to refer to Buddhism's mendicant monks (see source 20).

²One of the Buddha's titles, its derivation is not totally clear. It seems to mean "He who has arrived at the Truth."

³Total Enlightenment.

⁴The state of release from the limitations of existence and rebirth. The word means literally "extinction," in the sense that one has extinguished all worldly desires. In essence, it is Buddhahood. Like the Hindu Brahma-nirvana, Buddhist Nirvana is a state of absolute being and nonbeing.

⁵Understanding the truth about the universality of suffering, knowing the path leading to its extinction, and realizing it is attainable.

⁶Preparing for the journey to Enlightenment by freeing one's mind of ill will, sensuous desire, and cruelty.

⁷Abstaining from lying, harsh language, and gossip.

⁸Acting honestly by avoiding killing, stealing, and unlawful sexual intercourse.

⁹Avoiding any occupation that harms directly or indirectly any living being.

¹⁰Going beyond simply acting morally, a person now avoids all distractions and temptations of the flesh.

¹¹Now that one has put aside distractions, one focuses the entire mind fully on important issues, such as life, suffering, and death.

Right Meditation.¹² This, O Bhikkhus, is the Middle Path the knowledge of which the Tathagata has gained, which leads to insight, which leads to wisdom, which conduces to calm, to knowledge, to the Sambodhi, to Nirvana.

"This, O Bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of Suffering: Birth is suffering; decay is suffering; illness is suffering; death is suffering. Presence of objects we hate, is suffering; Separation from objects we love, is suffering; not to obtain what we desire, is suffering. Briefly, . . . clinging to existence is suffering.

"This, O Bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of the Cause of suffering: Thirst, that leads to rebirth, accompanied by pleasure and lust, finding its delight here and there. This thirst is threefold, namely, thirst for pleasure, thirst for existence, thirst for prosperity.

"This, O Bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of the Cessation of suffering: it ceases with the complete cessation of this thirst, — a cessation which consists in the absence of every passion — with the abandoning of this thirst, with the doing away with it, with the deliverance from it, with the destruction of desire.

"This, O Bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of the Path which leads to the cessation of suffering: that Holy Eightfold Path, that is to say, Right Belief, Right Aspiration, Right Speech, Right Conduct, Right Means of Livelihood, Right Endeavor, Right Memory, Right Meditation. . . .

"As long, O Bhikkhus, as I did not possess with perfect purity this true knowledge and insight into these four Noble Truths . . . so long, O Bhikkhus, I knew that I had not yet obtained the highest, absolute Sambodhi in the world of men and gods. . . .

"But since I possessed, O Bhikkhus, with perfect purity this true knowledge and insight into these four Noble Truths . . . then I knew, O Bhikkhus, that I had obtained the highest, universal Sambodhi. . . .

"And this knowledge and insight arose in my mind: The emancipation of my mind cannot be lost; this is my last birth; hence I shall not be born again!"

QUESTIONS THAT TEND NOT TO EDIFICATION

Thus I have heard.

On certain occasion the Blessed One¹³ was dwelling at Savatthi in Jetavana monastery in Anathapindika's Park. Now it happened to the venerable Malunkyaputta,¹⁴ being in seclusion and plunged in meditation, that a consideration presented itself to his mind as follows:

"These theories that the Blessed One has left unexplained, has set aside and rejected — that the world is eternal, that the world is not eternal, that the world is finite, that the world is infinite, that the soul and the body are identical, that the soul is one thing and the body another, that the saint¹⁵ exists after death, that the saint does not exist after death, that the saint both exists and does not exist after death, that the saint neither exists nor does not exist after death — these the Blessed One does not explain to me. And the fact that the Blessed One does not explain them to me does not please me nor suit me. Therefore I will draw near to the Blessed One and inquire of him concerning this matter. If the Blessed One will explain them to me, . . . I will lead the religious life under the Blessed One. If the Blessed One will not explain them to me, . . . I will abandon religious training and return to the lower life of a layman."

Then the venerable Malunkyaputta arose in the evening from his seclusion, and drew near to where the Blessed One was; and having drawn near and greeted the Blessed One, he sat down respectfully at one side. And seated respectfully at one side, the venerable Malunkyaputta spoke to the Blessed One as follows:

¹²Total discipline of the mind, body, and spirit leading to a state of absolute awareness that transcends consciousness.

¹³The Buddha.

¹⁴One of the Buddha's disciples.

¹⁵An *arabat*, or "one worthy of reverence," who has achieved the fourth and highest stage leading to Nirvana (see source 20, note 6). The title is also spelled *arabhat* and *arhat*.

"Reverend Sir, it happened to me, as I was just now in seclusion and plunged in meditation, that a consideration presented itself to my mind, as follows: 'These theories that the Blessed One has left unexplained, has set aside and rejected — that the world is eternal, that the world is not eternal . . . that the saint neither exists nor does not exist after death — these the Blessed One does not explain to me. And the fact that the Blessed One does not explain them to me does not please me nor suit me. I will draw near to the Blessed One and inquire of him concerning this matter. If the Blessed One will explain to me, either that the world is eternal, or that the world is not eternal . . . or that the saint neither exists nor does not exist after death, in that case I will lead the religious life under the Blessed One. If the Blessed One will not explain to me, either that the world is eternal, or that the world is not eternal . . . or that the saint neither exists nor does not exist after death, in that case I will abandon religious training and return to the lower life of a layman.'

"If the Blessed One knows that the world is eternal, let the Blessed One explain to me that the world is eternal; if the Blessed One knows that the world is not eternal, let the Blessed One explain to me that the world is not eternal. If the Blessed One does not know either that the world is eternal or that the world is not eternal, the only upright thing for one who does not know, or who has not that insight, is to say, 'I do not know; I have not that insight.'"

"Pray Malunkyaputta, did I ever say to you, 'Come, Malunkyaputta, lead the religious life under me, and I will explain to you either that the world is eternal, or that the world is not eternal . . . or that the saint neither exists nor does not exist after death?'"

"No, indeed, Reverend Sir."

"Or did you ever say to me, 'Reverend Sir, I will lead the religious life under the Blessed One, on condition that the Blessed One explain to me either that the world is eternal, or that the world is not eternal . . . or that the saint neither exists nor does not exist after death?'"

"No, indeed, Reverend Sir." . . .

"That being the case, vain man, whom are you so angrily denouncing?"

"Malunkyaputta, any one who should say, 'I will not lead the religious life under the Blessed One until the Blessed One shall explain to me either that the world is eternal. Or that the world is not eternal . . . or that the saint neither exists nor does not exist after death'; — that person would die, Malunkyaputta, before the Tathagata had ever explained this to him.

"It is as if, Malunkyaputta, a man had been wounded by an arrow thickly smeared with poison, and his friends and companions, his relatives and kinsfolk, were to procure for him a physician or surgeon; and the sick man were to say, 'I will not have this arrow taken out until I have learned whether the man who wounded me belonged to the warrior caste, or to the Brahmin caste, or to the agricultural caste, or to the menial caste.'

"Or again he were to say, 'I will not have this arrow taken out until I have learned the name of the man who wounded me, and to what clan he belongs.'

"Or again he were to say, 'I will not have this arrow taken out until I have learned whether the man who wounded me was tall, or short, or of the middle height.'

"Or again he were to say, 'I will not have this arrow taken out until I have learned whether the man who wounded me was black, or dusky, or of a yellow skin.'

"Or again he were to say, 'I will not have this arrow taken out until I have learned whether the man who wounded me was from this or that village, or town, or city.' . . .

▷ Many similar possibilities are mentioned.

"That man would die, Malunkyaputta, without ever having learned this.

"In exactly the same way, Malunkyaputta, any one who should say, 'I will not lead the religious life under the Blessed One until the Blessed One

shall explain to me either that the world is eternal, or that the world is not eternal . . . or that the saint neither exists nor does not exist after death'; — that person would die, Malunkyaputta, before the Tathagata had ever explained this to him.

"The religious life, Malunkyaputta, does not depend on the dogma that the world is eternal; nor does the religious life, Malunkyaputta, depend on the dogma that the world is not eternal. Whether the dogma obtain, Malunkyaputta, that the world is eternal, or that the world is not eternal, there still remain birth, old age, death, sorrow, lamentation, misery, grief, and despair, for the extinction of which in the present life I am prescribing. . . .

"Accordingly, Malunkyaputta, bear always in mind what it is that I have not explained, and what it is that I have explained. And 'what, Malunkyaputta, have I not explained? I have not explained, Malunkyaputta, that the world is eternal; I have not explained that the world is not eternal; I have not explained that the world is finite; I have not explained that the world is infinite; I have not explained that the soul and the body are identical; I have not explained that the soul is one thing and the body another; I have not explained that the saint exists after death; I have not explained that the saint does not exist

after death; I have not explained that the saint both exists and does not exist after death; I have not explained that the saint neither exists nor does not exist after death. And why, Malunkyaputta, have I not explained this? Because, Malunkyaputta, this profits not, nor has to do with the fundamentals of religion, nor tends to aversion, absence of passion, cessation, quiescence, the supernatural faculties, supreme wisdom, and Nirvana; therefore I have not explained it.

"And what, Malunkyaputta, have I explained? Misery, Malunkyaputta, have I explained; the origin of misery have I explained; the cessation of misery have I explained; and the path leading to the cessation of misery have I explained. And why, Malunkyaputta, have I explained this? Because, Malunkyaputta, this does profit, has to do with the fundamentals of religion, and tends to aversion, absence of passion, cessation, quiescence, knowledge, supreme wisdom, and Nirvana; therefore have I explained it. Accordingly, Malunkyaputta, bear always in mind what it is that I have not explained, and what it is that I have explained."

Thus the Blessed One spoke and, delighted, the venerable Malunkyaputta applauded the speech of the Blessed One.

Admitting Women to the Mendicant Life



20 ▼ THE DISCIPLINE BASKET

Although the Buddha originally preached his message of Enlightenment to a group of five male ascetics, his teachings soon attracted large numbers of people who desired to follow the Middle Path in the hope of achieving release from the shackles of existence. These aspirants to Buddhahood fell into two categories. Some enthusiastic disciples, like Malunkyaputta in our previous source, became *mendicant*, or begging, monks and attempted to live the Holy Eightfold Path to its fullest. They were known collectively as the *Sangha*, or Order (of monks). Most people attracted to the Buddha's message, however, remained enmeshed in the affairs of the world and constituted a class of faithful laity who supported the Sangha's holy beggars and attempted in individual ways to translate the Buddhist

Middle Path into a code of conduct that enabled them to balance their attachments to this world with their desire to find a means of escaping the bonds of suffering.

From the start, this group of lay followers contained women, as well as men, whereas the Sangha appears to have originally been composed only of men. Soon, however, the question arose: What is to be done about women who wish to become monastic beggars? According to a venerable tradition, the first woman to challenge the Buddha on this issue was his maternal aunt and foster mother, Queen Maha-Prajapati, who had recently been widowed.

The following story of Maha-Prajapati's attempt to become a mendicant is preserved in *The Discipline Basket*, a collection of texts that is explained in the introduction to source 19. As we saw, although these texts were written down in their present form many centuries after the Buddha's death, they are based on strong oral traditions. As such, they probably contain more than just a few germs of historical truth. Many modern scholars, however, maintain that the strong misogynistic sentiments expressed in this story reflect not the Buddha's ideas and teachings but those of later followers.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. Why does the Buddha finally relent and allow his aunt and other women to embrace the mendicant life?
2. Even after giving his permission, what does he think about the wisdom of allowing women to enter the monastic life?
3. Consider the eight special rules for Buddhist nuns. What is their combined effect?
4. Do you think you can legitimately infer anything from this document concerning the general status of women in north India in the age of the Buddha?
5. Regardless of your answer to question 4, what can you infer from this document about the status of women in Theravada Buddhist society around the late first century B.C.E.?
6. Notwithstanding the special rules laid upon them, as well as the profession's natural rigor, why would some women find the mendicant monastic life attractive?

Now the Blessed Buddha was staying among the Sakyas¹ in Kapilavatthu. . . . And Maha-Prajapati the Gotami² went to the place where the Blessed One was, and on arriving there, bowed down

before the Blessed One, and remained standing on one side. And so standing she spoke thus to the Blessed One:

"It would be well, lord, if women should be

¹The Buddha's clan.

²Her family name; before renouncing his patrimony, the Buddha had been surnamed Gautama.

allowed to renounce their homes and enter the homeless state under the doctrine and discipline proclaimed by the Tathagata.”³

“Enough, Gotami. Let it not please you that women should be allowed to do so.”

[And a second and a third time Maha-Prajapati the Gotami made the same request in the same words, and received the same reply.]

Then Maha-Prajapati the Gotami, sad and sorrowful that the Blessed One would not permit women to enter the homeless state, bowed down before the Blessed One, and keeping him on her right hand as she passed him, departed . . . weeping and in tears.

Now when the Blessed One had remained at Kapilavatthu as long as he thought fit, he set out on his journey toward Vesali; and traveling straight on he in due course arrived there. And there at Vesali the Blessed One stayed. . . .

And Maha-Prajapati the Gotami cut off her hair, and put on orange-colored robes,⁴ and set out, with a number of women of the Sakya clan, toward Vesali; and in due course she arrived at Vesali. . . . And Maha-Prajapati the Gotami, with swollen feet and covered with dust, sad and sorrowful, weeping and in tears, took her stand outside under the entrance porch.

And the venerable Ananda⁵ saw her so standing there, and on seeing her so he said to Maha-Prajapati: “Why are you standing there, outside the porch, with swollen feet and covered with dust, sad and sorrowful, weeping and in tears?”

“Because Ananda, the lord, the Blessed One, does not permit women to renounce their homes and enter the homeless state under the doctrine and discipline proclaimed by the Tathagata.”

Then the venerable Ananda went up to the place where the Blessed One was, and bowed down before the Blessed One, and took his seat

on one side. And, so sitting, the venerable Ananda said to the Blessed One:

“Behold, lord, Maha-Prajapati the Gotami is standing outside under the entrance porch, with swollen feet and covered with dust, sad and sorrowful, weeping and in tears, because the Blessed One does not permit women to renounce their homes and enter the homeless state under the doctrine and discipline proclaimed by the Blessed One.

“It would be well, lord, if women were to have permission granted to them to do as she desires.”

“Enough, Ananda. Let it not please you that women should be allowed to do so.” . . .

[And a second and a third time Ananda made the same request, in the same words, and received the same reply.]

Then the venerable Ananda thought: “The Blessed One does not give his permission, let me now ask the Blessed One on another ground.” And the venerable Ananda said to the Blessed One:

“Are women, lord, capable when they have gone forth from the household life and entered the homeless state, under the doctrine and discipline proclaimed by the Blessed One — are they capable of realizing the fruit of conversion, or of the second path, or of the third path,⁶ or of Arahatsip?”

“They are capable, Ananda.”

“If then, lord, they are so capable, since Maha-Prajapati the Gotami has proved herself of great service to the Blessed One, when as aunt and nurse she nourished him and gave him milk, and on the death of his mother suckled the Blessed One at her own breast, it would be well, lord, that women should have permission to go forth from the household life and enter the homeless state under the doctrine and discipline proclaimed by the Tathagata.”

³One of the Buddha’s titles. (See note 2 in the previous document.)

⁴Saffron- or orange-colored robes are the distinguishing costume of Buddhist monks.

⁵The Buddha’s beloved disciple and personal attendant.

⁶The three states that anticipate Arahatsip (see source 19, note 15) once one has received and accepted the message of the Four Noble Truths: the fruit of entering the stream; the fruit of the once-returner; the fruit of the nonreturner.

"If then, Ananda, Maha-Prajapati the Gotami takes upon herself the eight chief rules, let that be reckoned as her ordination.⁷ They are these:

1. "A nun, even if of a hundred years standing, shall make salutation to, shall rise up in the presence of, shall bow down before, and shall perform all proper duties toward a monk, even a newly initiated monk. This is a rule to be revered and revered, honored and observed, and her life long never to be transgressed.
2. "A nun is not to spend the rainy season⁸ in a district in which there is no monk. This is a rule . . . never to be transgressed.
3. "Every half month a nun is to await from the order of Bhikkhus⁹ two things, . . . the date of the uposatha ceremony,¹⁰ and the time when the monk will come to give the exhortation. This is a rule . . . never to be transgressed.
4. "After keeping the rainy season the nun is to hold Pavarana,¹¹ to inquire whether any fault can be laid to her charge, before both orders — monks as well as nuns — with respect to three matters, namely, what has been seen, and what has been heard, and what has been suspected. This is a rule . . . never to be transgressed.
5. "A nun who has been guilty of a serious offense is to undergo suitable discipline toward both orders, monks and nuns. This is a rule . . . never to be transgressed.
6. "When a nun, as novice, has been trained for two years in the . . . rules, she is to ask leave for . . . ordination from both orders, monks as well as nuns. This is a rule . . . never to be transgressed.
7. "A nun is on no pretext to revile or abuse a monk. This is a rule . . . never to be transgressed.

8. "From henceforth official admonition by nuns of monks is forbidden, whereas the official admonition of nuns by monks is not forbidden. This is a rule . . . never to be transgressed.

"If, Ananda, Maha-Prajapati the Gotami take upon herself these eight chief rules, let that be reckoned . . . as her ordination."

Then the venerable Ananda, when he had learned from the Blessed One these eight chief rules, went to Maha-Prajapati the Gotami and told her all that the Blessed One had said, to which she replied: . . .

"I, Ananda, take upon me these eight chief rules never to be transgressed my life long."

Then the venerable Ananda returned to the Blessed One, and bowed down before him, and took his seat on one side. And, so sitting, the venerable Ananda said to the Blessed One: "Maha-Prajapati the Gotami, lord, has taken upon herself the eight chief rules, the aunt of the Blessed One has received . . . ordination."

"If, Ananda, women had not received permission to go out from the household life and enter the homeless state, under the doctrine and discipline proclaimed by the Tathagata, then would the pure religion, Ananda, have lasted long, the good law would have stood fast for a thousand years. But since, Ananda, women now have received that permission, the pure religion, Ananda, will not now last so long, the good law will now stand fast for only five hundred years. Just, Ananda, as houses in which there are many women and but few men, are easily violated by robbers, by burglars; just so, Ananda, under whatever doctrine and discipline women are allowed to go out from the household life into the homeless state, that religion will not last long.

"And just, Ananda, as when disease, called mildew, falls upon a field of rice in fine condition, that field of rice does not continue long;

⁷By accepting these eight special rules, she is ordained to the monastic life.

⁸The time of spiritual retreat.

⁹Male monks.

¹⁰The twice-monthly monastic meeting.

¹¹The final ceremony of the religious retreat where one seeks to discover one's faults.

just so, Ananda, under whatsoever doctrine and discipline women are allowed to go forth from the household life into the homeless state, that religion will not last long. And just, Ananda, as when disease, called blight, falls upon a field of sugar-cane in good condition, that field of sugar-cane does not continue long; just so, Ananda, under whatsoever doctrine and disci-

pline women are allowed to go forth from the household life into the homeless state, that religion does not last long. And just, Ananda, as a man would in anticipation build an embankment to a great reservoir, beyond which the water should not overpass; just even so, Ananda, have I in anticipation laid down these eight chief rules for the nuns, their life long not to be overpassed."

Persians, Israelites, and Their Gods

Two peoples of Southwest Asia, the Persians and the Israelites, evolved visions of a single, uncreated God of the universe, who was the Creator of all goodness and who demanded wholehearted devotion and imposed an uncompromising code of moral behavior upon all believers. Both the Persian *Abura Mazda* (Lord Wisdom) and the Hebrew YHWH (I am Who am) were originally perceived as sky gods, existing among a multiplicity of other gods of nature; by the sixth century B.C.E., however, their respective devotees worshiped each as the sole source of all holiness. What is more, each of these two divinities was perceived as *the* sole God of history. That is, each God alone used humans as agents to serve the Divine Will and, thereby, to assist in the realization of the Divine Plan for humanity. For both the Persians and Hebrews, human history had a purpose and a goal. By serving as agents in the working out of God's holy plan for creation, humans assumed a spiritual dignity and importance that they could otherwise never have hoped to attain.

Although the Persian faith, known as *Zoroastrianism*, admitted the existence of a number of lesser divinities and, therefore, was not strictly monotheistic, it and the faith of the Israelites laid the basis for Southwest Asia's distinctive vision of ethical monotheism.

The Struggle between Good and Evil

21 ▼ *Zarathustra, GATHAS*

During the second millennium B.C.E., about the same time that one branch of the Aryans wandered into the Indian subcontinent, another branch settled the highlands of *Iran* (the land of the Aryans). Initially, the religion and general culture of the people who settled Iran were almost identical to that of the vedic Aryans of India. For example, the Iranians celebrated the slaying of Verethra, the drought, by their war-god Indara. The parallel with Indra's striking down Vritra, the dragon of drought, is obvious (see Chapter 2, source 11). In time, however, these Iranians developed a civilization that differed radically from that of the Indo-Aryans. We call that ancient civilization *Persian*.

By the late sixth century B.C.E., the Persians possessed the largest empire the world had yet seen. For nearly two centuries they united Southwest Asia and portions of Central Asia, Northeast Africa, and the Balkan region of Europe into a politically centralized yet culturally diverse entity. During the reign of Darius the Great (r. 522–486 B.C.E.), who rightly styled himself King of Kings, the royal house of Persia officially adopted as its religion the teachings of a native son, *Zarathustra* (or *Zoroaster*, as he was called by the Greeks). The highly ethical message of this Persian religious visionary appears to have been one of the major factors contributing to the empire's general policy of good government.

We know very little about the life of Zarathustra. According to a late Persian tradition, he lived 258 years before Alexander the Great, or around the first quarter of the sixth century B.C.E. As appealing as this putative date is for those who would place this religious revolutionary squarely into the so-called Axial Age, it seems likely that Zarathustra flourished many centuries earlier. The archaic language of his few extant hymns strongly suggests that he lived no later than 1000 B.C.E., probably closer to 1200, and possibly as early as the 1300s. Apparently he belonged to the priestly class that performed fire sacrifices, very much like the Indo-Aryan Brahmins. The religious world into which he had been born was filled with a multiplicity of lesser gods known as *daevas* (called *devas* by the Indo-Aryans) and three greater gods, each of whom bore the title *Ahura* (Lord), and all of these deities commanded worship. Zarathustra's great religious breakthrough seems to have been that he preached that one of these divine beings, *Ahura Mazda*, was the sole God of creation and the supreme deity of the universe. This uncreated God and source of all goodness alone was worthy of the highest worship. To be sure, Ahura Mazda had created lesser benign spirits, known as *yazatas*, to aid him, and they merited devotion, but all of the traditional Iranian daevas were evil demons, who deserved no worship. Indeed, these daevas were the creation of another uncreated entity, *Angra Mainyu* (Hostile Spirit), whose evil existence was the source of all sin and misery in the universe.

It is clear that Zarathustra claimed to be the *prophet* (a person speaking by divine inspiration and, thereby, revealing the will of God) of Ahura Mazda. Equally clear, Zarathustra taught his disciples that Ahura Mazda required all humans to join in the cosmic struggle against Angra Mainyu. Although coeternal with Lord Wisdom, Hostile Spirit was nowhere his equal. To be sure, Angra Mainyu (also known as the *Liar*) and his minions afflicted human souls with evil and led them away from the path of righteousness, but in the end Angra Mainyu and his daevas would be defeated. Strictly speaking, such a vision, which sees the universe engaged in a contest between two divine principles, one good and the other evil, is not monotheistic but rather *dualistic*. Nevertheless, Zarathustra's dualistic theology focused on a single God of goodness and should be seen as one of the major roots of Southwest Asian ethical monotheism.

Zarathustra's teachings took hold in Persia, especially with the rise of the first Persian Empire in the sixth century B.C.E. From 224 to 651 C.E. Zoroastrianism was the official state religion of a revived Persian Empire under the Sassanian house, and it was only in the Sassanian Era, possibly as late as the sixth century C.E., that the *Avesta*, the Zoroastrian collection of holy scripture, was written down

in its final form. Although the *Avesta* encompasses many texts that date from well after Zarathustra's time, it contains a few short devotional hymns, known as *Gathas*, that date to the age of Zarathustra and probably owe their composition to him or an early disciple. Their archaic language and often unclear references make them hard, even impossible to interpret with full confidence. Yet, they are our only reliable sources for the original teachings of the Persian prophet. As such, they illustrate, but ambiguously so, his vision and message.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. How are we able to infer that Zarathustra believed he had been called directly by Ahura Mazda to serve as a prophet?
2. What evidence indicates that Zarathustra saw Ahura Mazda as the sole creator of the universe?
3. Where and how does Zarathustra refer to Ahura Mazda's use of humanity and history to realize certain sacred purposes?
4. How does each person's life become a microcosm of the battle between Ahura Mazda and the Liar?
5. How do we know that Zarathustra believed Ahura Mazda would ultimately triumph over evil?
6. Does Zarathustra see his faith as only one of many paths to the truth or is it the Truth?
7. What is promised those who serve Ahura Mazda faithfully? What about those who do not accept and serve this God?

Then shall I recognize you as strong and holy, Mazda,¹ when by the hand in which you yourself hold the destinies that you will assign to the Liar and the Righteous . . . the might of Good Thought² shall come to me.

As the holy one I recognized you, Mazda Ahura, when I saw you in the beginning at the birth of Life, when you made actions and words to have their reward — evil for the evil, a good Destiny for the good — through your wisdom when creation shall reach its goal.

At which goal you will come with your holy Spirit, O Mazda, with Dominion, at the same with Good Thought, by whose action the settlements³ will prosper through Right. . . .

As the holy one I recognized you, Mazda Ahura, when Good Thought came to me and asked me, "Who are you? to whom do you belong? By what sign will you appoint the days for questioning about your possessions and yourself?"

Then I said to him: "To the first question, I am Zarathustra, a true foe to the Liar, to the utmost of my power, but a powerful support would I be to the Righteous, that I may attain the future things of the infinite Dominion, as I praise and proclaim you, Mazda." . . .

As the holy one I recognized you, Mazda Ahura, when Good Thought came to me, when the still mind taught me to declare what is best:

¹*Mazda* means "wise" or "wisdom."

²Zarathustra conceived of Good Thought, Piety, and other such entities as spiritual beings whom Ahura Mazda had created to help in the battle against the forces of evil.

³People who are settled or civilized.

"Let not a man seek again and again to please the Liars, for they make all the righteous enemies."

And thus Zarathustra himself, O Ahura, chooses that spirit of thine that is holiest, Mazda. May Right be embodied, full of life and strength! May Piety abide in the Dominion where the sun shines! May Good Thought give destiny to men according to their works!

▼ ▼ ▼

This I ask you, tell me truly, Ahura. Who is by generation the Father of Right, at the first? Who determined the path of sun and stars? Who is it by whom the moon waxes and wanes again? This, O Mazda, and yet more, I want to know.

This I ask you, tell me truly, Ahura. Who upheld the earth beneath and the firmament from falling? Who the waters and the plants? Who yoked swiftness to winds and clouds? Who is, O Mazda, creator of Good Thought?

This I ask you, tell me truly, Ahura. What artist made light and darkness? What artist made sleep and waking? Who made morning, noon, and night, that call the understanding man to his duty? . . .

This I ask you, tell me truly, Ahura. Who created together with Dominion the precious Piety? Who made by wisdom the son obedient to his father? I strive to recognize by these things you, O Mazda, creator of all things through the holy spirit. . . .

This I ask you, tell me truly, Ahura. The Religion which is the best for all that are, which in union with Right should make prosperous all that is mine, will they duly observe it, the religion of my creed, with the words and action of Piety, in desire for your future good things, O Mazda?

This I ask you, tell me truly, Ahura — whether Piety will extend to those to whom your Reli-

gion shall be proclaimed? I was ordained at the first by you: all others I look upon with hatred of spirit.

This I ask you, tell me truly, Ahura. Who among those with whom I would speak is a righteous man, and who a liar? On which side is the enemy? . . .

This I ask you, tell me truly, Ahura — whether we shall drive the Lie away from us to those who being full of disobedience will not strive after fellowship with Right, nor trouble themselves with counsel of Good Thought. . . .

This I ask you, tell me truly, Ahura — whether through you I shall attain my goal . . . and that my voice may be effectual, that Welfare and Immortality may be ready to unite according to that promise with him who joins himself with Right.

This I ask you, tell me truly, Ahura — whether I shall indeed, O Right, earn that reward, even ten mares with a stallion and a camel,⁴ which was promised to me, O Mazda, as well as through you the future gift of Welfare and Immortality.

▼ ▼ ▼

I will speak of that which Mazda Ahura, the all-knowing, revealed to me first in this earthly life. Those of you that put not in practice this word as I think and utter it, to them shall be woe at the end of life. . . .

I will speak of that which the Holiest declared to me as the word that is best for mortals to obey: he, Mazda Ahura said, "They who at my bidding render him⁵ obedience, shall all attain Welfare and Immortality by the actions of the Good Spirit." . . .

In immortality shall the soul of the righteous be joyful, in perpetuity shall be the torments of the Liars. All this does Mazda Ahura appoint by his Dominion.

⁴Symbols of good fortune and earthly prosperity.

⁵Zarathustra.

A New Covenant for All Peoples



22 ▼ THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

As we saw in Chapter 2, around 1200 B.C.E. the Israelites moved into the land of Canaan. Once settled there, they waged a continuing battle to retain their independence, cultural identity, and exclusive devotion to YHWH. In the late eleventh century B.C.E., largely in response to Philistine pressure, the Israelites created a kingdom. Around 1020 B.C.E. their second king, David, captured Jerusalem and converted it into the religious and political capital of the Israelites.

The political stability of this kingdom was precarious at best. In 922 it was split into two independent entities: the larger kingdom of Israel in the north and the kingdom of Judah, centering on Jerusalem, in the south. In 722 the Assyrians obliterated Israel. The more compact and remote kingdom of Judah survived until 586 B.C.E., when finally a Semitic people from Mesopotamia known as the *Chaldeans* captured and destroyed Jerusalem and carried off most of Judah's upper classes into exile in Babylon, an episode known forever after as the *Babylonian Captivity*.

Cultural and religious stability was equally precarious. The cult of YHWH was in many ways more suitable to the life of the desert herder than to that of the settled farmer. As the Hebrews settled down, they adopted many of the religious practices of their Canaanite neighbors. This action occasioned angry protests from a group of religious reformers known as the *prophets*. The prophets, who claimed inspiration from YHWH, now increasingly referred to simply as the *Lord*, protested vehemently against debasement of the Mosaic religion, but in the process of their protest they broadened considerably the moral and theological scope of the worship of the Lord.

One of the greatest and last of these prophets was a person we know only as *Second Isaiah*. He served as the voice of a new faith that was born out of the anguish of the Babylonian Captivity. We call that faith *Judaism*.

The original Prophet Isaiah had towered over the religious scene of Jerusalem from the middle to the late eighth century B.C.E. and left behind a rich legacy of teaching on the Lord's role as the God who controls the destinies of all people. Second Isaiah, who lived in the mid and late sixth century B.C.E., carried on this tradition. Consequently, the prophecies of this otherwise unknown person were appended to the writings of the earlier Isaiah and appear as chapters 40 through 55 in the Bible's Book of Isaiah.

The following passages were composed around 538 B.C.E., when Cyrus the Great, king of Persia and conqueror of the Chaldean (Neo-Babylonian) Empire, released the Israelites from captivity. Here Second Isaiah metaphorically describes the people of Israel as YHWH's *Suffering Servant* and delineates the historical role that the Lord has decreed for this servant.

This notion of a God of goodness who uses human agents to drive history forward certainly reminds us of Zarathustra's message, and clearly elements of Zoroastrian belief — such as angels, the Devil, Heaven, Hell, Limbo, the Resurrection

of the Dead, a Savior-to-Come, and a Day of Judgment — would later surface in some forms of Judaism, as well as in Christianity and Islam. Nevertheless, it is impossible to say with any certainty what influence, if any, Zoroastrian teachings might have had on Second Isaiah's prophetic vision. We can only speculate.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. Consider the opening lines of this selection. In what manner has YHWH's special relationship with the people of Israel remained unchanged since the days of Moses?
2. Consider the Lord's relationship with King Cyrus and the Persians. Even though Cyrus does not know or honor Him, the Lord has chosen Cyrus as a servant. Why? In what ways does this represent a departure from the Israelites' traditional view of their neighbors (Chapter 2, source 15)?
3. What does Second Isaiah mean by the prophecy that the Lord will present Israel "as a light to the nations"? How will the Children of Israel's redemption from exile in Babylon serve a universal purpose?
4. In what way has the Lord's Covenant with Israel been given a new meaning? How does this new interpretation of the Covenant relate to the covenant Yahweh entered into with Noah (Chapter 2, source 13)?
5. What are the essential elements of Second Isaiah's vision of the Lord and this deity's Chosen People?
6. In what ways are Ahura Mazda and the Lord both universal gods of righteousness? How do their attitudes toward good and evil differ from that expressed by Lord Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gita* (source 17)? What do you conclude from this?
7. "For the Hebrews and Persians religion became the means of transforming the world, not negating it." What does the author of this statement mean? Do you agree or disagree? Why?
8. How do Ahura Mazda and the Lord differ from Brahman?

"But now hear, O Jacob¹ my servant,
Israel whom I have chosen!
Thus says the Lord who made you, who formed
you from the womb and will help you:
Fear not, O Jacob my servant,
Jeshurun² whom I have chosen.
For I will pour water on the thirsty land,
and streams on the dry ground;

I will pour my Spirit upon your descendants,
and my blessing on your offspring.
They shall spring up like grass amid waters,
like willows by flowing streams;
This one will say, 'I am the Lord's,'
another will call himself by the name of Jacob,
and another will write on his hand,
'The Lord's,'³

¹Here *Jacob* means all of Jacob's descendants — the Children of Israel.

²"Upright one" — a term of endearment.

³Compare this with Moses' command that the Israelites tie the Law to their arms and wear it on their foreheads (Chapter 2, source 14).

and surname himself by the name of Israel.
 Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel⁴
 and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts:
 "I am the first and I am the last;
 besides me there is no God. . . .
 Remember these things, O Jacob,
 and Israel, for you are my servant;
 I formed you, you are my servant;
 O Israel, you will not be forgotten by me.
 I have swept away your transgressions like
 a cloud,
 and your sins like mist;
 return to me, for I have redeemed you. . . .
 I am the Lord, who made all things,
 who stretched out the heavens alone,
 who spread out the earth —
 Who was with me? —
 who frustrates the omens of liars,
 and makes fools of diviners;
 who turns wise men back,
 and makes their knowledge foolish;
 who confirms the word of his servant,
 and performs the counsel of his messengers;
 who says of Jerusalem, 'She shall be inhabited,'
 and of the cities of Judah, 'They shall be built,
 and I will raise up their ruins,' . . .
 who says of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd.
 and he shall fulfill all my purpose';
 saying of Jerusalem, 'She shall be built,'
 and of the temple, 'Your foundation shall
 be laid.'"
 Thus says the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus,
 whose right hand I have grasped,
 to subdue nations before him
 and ungird the loins of kings,
 to open doors before him
 that gates may not be closed:
 "I will go before you
 and level the mountains,
 I will break in pieces the doors of bronze

and cut asunder the bars of iron,⁵
 I will give you the treasures of darkness
 and the hoards in secret places,
 that you may know that it is I, the Lord,
 the God of Israel, who call you by your name.
 For the sake of my servant Jacob,
 and Israel my chosen,
 I call you by your name,
 I surname you,⁶ though you do not know me.
 I am the Lord, and there is no other,
 besides me there is no God;
 I gird you, though you do not know me,
 that men may know, from the rising of the sun
 and from the west, that there is none
 besides me;
 I am the Lord, and there is no other. . . .
 I made the earth,
 and created man upon it;
 it was my hands that stretched out
 the heavens,
 and I commanded all their host.
 I have aroused him⁷ in righteousness,
 and I will make straight all his ways;
 he shall build my city⁸
 and set my exiles free,
 not for price or reward,"
 says the Lord of hosts. . . .
 "I the Lord speak the truth,
 I declare what is right.
 "Assemble yourselves and come,
 draw near together,
 you survivors of the nations!⁹
 They have no knowledge
 who carry about their wooden idols,
 and keep on praying to a god
 that cannot save.
 Declare and present your case;
 let them take counsel together!
 Who told this long ago?
 Who declared it of old?

⁴This refers to all of the Israelites and should not be confused with the kingdom of Israel, which the Assyrians destroyed in 722 B.C.E.

⁵A reference to the great walls of Babylon.

⁶The Lord bestows on Cyrus the title *the Great*.

⁷Cyrus.

⁸Jerusalem will be rebuilt.

⁹All peoples who survive the collapse of the Chaldean, or Neo-Babylonian, Empire.

Was it not I, the Lord?
 And there is no other god besides me,
 a righteous God and a Savior;
 there is none besides me.
 "Turn to me and be saved,"¹⁰
 all the ends of the earth!
 For I am God, and there is no other.
 By myself I have sworn,
 from my mouth has gone forth
 in righteousness
 a word that shall not return:
 'To me every knee shall bow,
 every tongue shall swear.'
 "Only in the Lord, it shall be said of me,
 are righteousness and strength;
 to him shall come and be ashamed,
 all who were incensed against him.
 In the Lord all the offspring of Israel
 shall triumph and glory." . . .
 Listen to me, O coastlands,
 and hearken, you peoples from afar.
 The Lord called me¹¹ from the womb,
 from the body of my mother he named
 my name.
 He made my mouth like a sharp sword,
 in the shadow of his hand he hid me;

he made me a polished arrow,
 in his quiver he hid me away.
 And he said to me, "You are my servant,
 Israel, in whom I will be glorified."
 But I said, "I have labored in vain,
 I have spent my strength for nothing
 and vanity;
 yet surely my right is with the Lord,
 and my recompense with my God."
 And now the Lord says, . . .
 "It is too light a thing that you should be
 my servant
 to raise up the tribes of Jacob
 and to restore the preserved of Israel;
 I will give you as a light to the nations,
 that my salvation may reach to the end of
 the earth."
 Thus says the Lord,
 the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One,
 to one deeply despised, abhorred by
 the nations,
 the servant of rulers:
 "Kings shall see and arise;
 princes, and they shall prostrate themselves;
 because of the Lord, who is faithful,
 the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you."

¹⁰Most scholars conclude that the terms "save" and "salvation" used by Second Isaiah do not imply a promise of any Paradise after death but, rather, earthly peace and prosperity.

¹¹The Children of Israel.

Chapter 4

The Secular Made Sacred

Developing the Humanistic Traditions
of China and Hellas: 600–200 B.C.E.

The Chinese and the Greeks, who inhabited the eastern and western extremes of civilized Eurasia in the sixth century B.C.E., had deities and spirits for every imaginable function and a wide range of religious taboos and rituals. But religion in its narrowest sense — reverence for a supernatural being — offered them little in the way of either intellectual stimulation or emotional outlet. While contemporaries in India and Southwest Asia were raising religious speculation to high levels of abstract thought, religion for the Chinese and Greeks remained, for the most part, a practical affair. One sacrificed to the gods and spirits in order to assure their benevolence. Religion was a form of magical insurance and not a relationship with Ultimate Reality.

At the same time, the social and psychic crises of the Age of Iron were just as real in China and Greece as elsewhere. In fashioning responses to the questions occasioned by the dislocation of traditional ways of life, both the Chinese and Greeks looked more toward this world than the Beyond and created cultures that were essentially *humanistic* (human centered) and *secular* (of this world) in the sense that they focused on humanity's position within an observable universe of finite space and time. Social and political philosophy rather than theology engaged the intellectual energies of the Chinese and the Greeks as they endeavored to meet the challenges of the Iron Age.

In China various philosophers offered insights into how humans should behave in regard to their families, the state, and nature. These philosophers also struggled with the issue of personal excellence. They first inquired whether such a

goal was achievable or even desirable, and many ultimately concluded that the cult of individuality that was inherent in such a quest for personal perfection threatened the harmony of the family, the state, and even the natural order. Therefore, it was to be avoided. For those who accepted, however tentatively and reluctantly, even a modified search for personal excellence, several questions remained: How is it achieved, and what purposes does it serve? Does one's cultivation of virtue have only personal value, or is it subordinate to a higher social purpose?

Many of the same human-centered concerns preoccupied Greek rationalists. Two issues particularly dominated Greek social thought: (1) How does the individual achieve excellence? This was a quality the Greeks assumed was the natural goal of all human striving and which they termed *arete*. (2) How does the individual function as an effective citizen within the city-state? Most Greek social philosophers, at least during the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.E., assumed that cultivation of one's personal talents and good citizenship were complementary and not antithetical pursuits. In other words, accomplished individuals were the best citizens.

Additionally, a small but highly influential group of Greek rationalists turned their attention to an objective study of the physical environment, thereby becoming the West's first natural scientists. Like its social philosophers, Greece's scientists attempted to explain the workings of the physical universe in response to human needs, the most basic of which was to provide knowledge that would allow people to control their lives and environment.

The Chinese and the Greeks did not look to divine forces for direction and meaning in life. Rather, they fashioned cultures in which humanity and the natural world were the measure of all that was important to them. However, concentration on the human-sized matters of this world did not mean that the Chinese and the Greeks lacked a sense of a sacred mystery. Nothing could be farther from the truth. In essence, they made the secular sacred.

China: Thought in Search of Harmony

Ages of political and social unrest often are times of intellectual ferment, as was true of the era of Eastern Zhou (770–256 B.C.E.). The collapse of the Western Zhou monarchy in 771 signaled the end of all effective royal power in China (limited though it had been) and ushered in a five-hundred-year period when regional

states held center stage. Zhou kings continued to perform their traditional religious roles and received tokens of nominal obedience from the great lords. True power, however, lay in the hands of the regional lords, who developed bureaucratic governments and strong standing armies. With each local prince essentially a sovereign, military and diplomatic maneuvering among their states became a constant fact of life. As disruptive as this was at times, it also proved to be a stimulus to intellectual activity. Both the demands of statecraft at the regional level and the occasional social dislocation that resulted from the conflicts among these states stimulated the development of political theory and social philosophy.

This was especially true from the fifth century B.C.E. onward, as wars became more frequent and bitter. Chinese historians traditionally catalogue the period from 403 to 221 B.C.E. as the *Age of Warring States*. Innovations such as cavalry, iron weapons, and the crossbow broke the battlefield superiority of the chariot-driving aristocracy. Armies of conscripted foot and horse soldiers became larger and more deadly. Concomitantly, intellectuals sought to keep pace with this changing world.

Between 260 and 221 B.C.E., *Qin*, the most aggressive and best organized of the warring states, conquered all rival powers in China and established a new ruling family, the short-lived but pivotal Qin Dynasty (221–206 B.C.E.). The triumph of the lord of Qin, the self-styled *Qin Shi Huangdi* (the First Emperor of Qin), who ruled from 221 to 210 B.C.E., not only inaugurated China's first age of empire, it brought with it the momentary victory of a political philosophy known as *Legalism*. In conforming to the principles of Legalism, the Qin regime was ruthless and brutal in its drive for complete centralization of authority. Undone by the harshness of its laws and policies, the Qin Dynasty collapsed in early 206 in the midst of rebellion and civil war. Within four years, however, a commoner general, Liu Bang, reformulated the empire by establishing the successful and long-lived *Han Dynasty* (202 B.C.E.–220 C.E.).

Although the extreme measures of the Qin regime discredited Legalism as a philosophy, Legalist-inspired organizational structures and administrative procedures served as the framework of the highly centralized Han Empire. By the late second century B.C.E., however, the Han Dynasty adopted as its official ideology the gentler and more humane philosophy of *Confucianism*, which had also taken shape in the disturbing period of Eastern Zhou.

Han imperial policies and institutions were, therefore, the products of a Confucian-Legalist synthesis, but these were not the only modes of thought to play a prominent role then and ever after in China. *Daoism*, an antirational, quite antipolitical, and somewhat antisocial philosophy, had also emerged from the confusion of Eastern Zhou and survived the hostility of Qin censors to become an integral part of Chinese thought and esthetics.

Although they offered different answers to the ills of their day and presented some striking differences of perspective, all three schools of thought claimed to offer the correct *Way*, or path, to harmony. Daoism emphasized harmony with nature; Confucianism emphasized the harmony of human relationships; and Legalism emphasized the harmony of a well-regulated state. A fourth school of

thought that emerged during this era of profound intellectual fertility also emphasized harmony but harmony on a grander scale. Philosophers who developed the dualistic theory of *Yin* and *Yang* encapsulated the entire universe in their explanation of the intrinsic harmony that infuses everything that exists. Integral to their philosophy was the belief that by understanding the natural harmony of the universe that results from the balance of Yin and Yang, one could set aright anything that had fallen into a state of disharmony — be it some element of nature, human relations, the social-political order, or even the human body.

Daoism: The Way That Is and Is Not



23 ▼ *Laozi,*

THE CLASSIC OF THE WAY AND VIRTUE

Few if any philosophies are as enigmatic as *Daoism* — the teachings of the Way (Dao). The opening lines of this school's greatest masterpiece, *The Classic of the Way and Virtue* (*Dao De Jing*), which is ascribed to the legendary *Laozi*, immediately confront the reader with Daoism's essential paradox: "The Way that can be trodden is not the enduring and unchanging Way. The name that can be named is not the enduring and unchanging name." Here is a philosophy that purports to teach *the* Way of truth but simultaneously claims that the True Way transcends human understanding. Encapsulated within a little book of some five thousand words is a philosophy that defies definition, spurns reason, and rejects words as inadequate.

The Dao is limitless and its origins are infinite; somewhat like the Way that it purports to teach and not teach, Daoism has many manifestations and numerous origins. No one knows when or where it originated, but its roots probably lie in the animistic religions of prehistorical China. Daoism's earliest sages are equally shadowy. According to tradition, *Laozi* supposedly was born around 604 B.C.E. and died about 517, making him an older contemporary of Confucius (source 24). According to one popular story, when Confucius visited him, Laozi instructed the younger man to rid himself of his arrogant airs and then bade him farewell. As another story has it, the aged Laozi decided to leave the state in which he lived because he foresaw its imminent decay. At the frontier he was delayed by a border official, who implored him not to depart without first leaving behind his wisdom. In response, Laozi dashed off the *Dao De Jing* and left, never to be heard from again (although according to one story that sprang up in Daoist circles in the fourth century C.E., Laozi went to India where he became the Buddha). The fact that Laozi means "Old Master" suggests to many that this sage was more a composite figure of legend and imagination than a historic individual of flesh and blood. Indeed, many scholars conclude that the bulk of the language, ideas, and allusions contained within this classic indicate an intellectual environment closer to 300 than to 500 B.C.E.

Whatever its date and circumstances of its composition, the *Dao De Jing* is one of the most profound and beautiful works ever written in Chinese and one of the

most popular. Daoism, especially as articulated in this little book, has exercised an incalculable influence on Chinese life, thought, and art over the centuries.

As you study the following selections, pay particular attention to the Daoist notion of *Actionless Activity*. Known in Chinese as *wuwei* and also translated as “Effortlessness,” “Nonaction,” and “Non-striving,” this idea pervades all Daoist thought and comes closest to being Daoism’s universal principle and driving force, if such is possible.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. How does one define the Way? How permanent is it? How limited is it? Is there anything it does not encompass?
2. Does the Way acknowledge absolute right and wrong?
3. What is *wuwei*, and how does it function? Why is it the greatest form of action?
4. How does a sage ruler who is in harmony with the Way govern?
5. What are Daoism’s major criticisms of Confucianism and Legalism?
6. Why would Daoism appeal to some individuals in the Age of Warring States?
7. When Buddhism initially entered China in the early centuries C.E., many Chinese thought it to be a variation of Daoism. How and why was this possible? In what ways was this a misperception?

THE WAY

The Dao that can be trodden is not the enduring and unchanging Dao. The name that can be named is not the enduring and unchanging name.

Conceived of as having no name, it is the Originator of heaven and earth; conceived of as having a name, it is the Mother of all things.

▼ ▼ ▼

The Dao produces all things and nourishes them; it produces them and does not claim them as its own; it does all, and yet does not boast of it; it presides over all, and yet does not control them. This is what is called “The mysterious quality” of the Dao.

▼ ▼ ▼

When the Great Dao ceased to be observed, benevolence and righteousness came into vogue. Then appeared wisdom and shrewdness, and there ensued great hypocrisy.¹

▼ ▼ ▼

Man takes his law from the Earth; the Earth takes its law from Heaven; Heaven takes its law from the Dao. The law of the Dao is its being what it is.

▼ ▼ ▼

All-pervading is the Great Dao! It may be found on the left hand and on the right.

All things depend on it for their production, which it gives to them, not one refusing obedience to it. When its work is accomplished, it

¹This is a criticism of the supposed hypocrisy of Confucians who claim to know and practice virtue (see source 24).

does not claim the name of having done it. It clothes all things as with a garment, and makes no assumption of being their lord; — it may be named in the smallest things; . . . it may be named in the greatest things.

▼ ▼ ▼

He who has in himself abundantly the attributes of the Dao is like an infant.

▼ ▼ ▼

The Dao in its regular course does nothing, for the sake of doing it, and so there is nothing which it does not do.

THE WISE PERSON

When we renounce learning we have no troubles.²

▼ ▼ ▼

If we could renounce our sageness and discard our wisdom, it would be better for the people a hundredfold. If we could renounce our benevolence and discard our righteousness, the people would again become filial and kindly.³ If we could renounce our artful contrivances and discard our scheming for gain, there would be no thieves nor robbers.

▼ ▼ ▼

The sage manages affairs without doing anything, and conveys his instructions without the use of speech.

▼ ▼ ▼

Therefore the sage holds in his embrace the one thing of humility, and manifests it to all the world. He is free from self-display, and therefore he shines; from self-assertion, and therefore he

is distinguished; from self-boasting, and therefore his merit is acknowledged; from self-complacency, and therefore he acquires superiority. It is because he is thus free from striving that therefore no one in the world is able to strive with him.

▼ ▼ ▼

When gold and jade fill the hall, their possessor cannot keep them safe. When wealth and honors lead to arrogance, this brings its evil on itself. When the work is done, and one's name is becoming distinguished, to withdraw into obscurity is the way of Heaven.

THE IDEAL GOVERNMENT

A state may be ruled by measures of correction;⁴ weapons of war may be used with crafty dexterity; but the kingdom is made one's own only by freedom from action and purpose.

How do I know that it is so? By these facts: — In the kingdom the multiplication of prohibitive enactments increases the poverty of the people; the more implements to add to their profit that the people have, the greater disorder is there in the state and clan; the more acts of crafty dexterity that men possess, the more do strange contrivances appear; the more display there is of legislation, the more thieves and robbers there are.

Therefore a sage has said, "I will do nothing, and the people will be transformed of themselves; I will be fond of keeping still, and the people will of themselves become correct. I will take no trouble about it, and the people will of themselves become rich; I will manifest no ambition, and the people will of themselves attain to the primitive simplicity."

²According to the Confucians, careful study and emulation of the virtues of the past is the primary avenue to harmony.

³These first two sentences reject the Confucian values of wisdom (saintliness), knowledge, human-heartedness, and righteousness, all of which, according to the Confucians,

will result in *filial piety* (proper devotion to one's parents and ancestors). See the introduction to source 24 for further discussion of the history of this Confucian principle.

⁴This aphorism rejects the principles and methods of Legalism (see source 25).

▼ ▼ ▼

Not to value and employ men of superior ability is the way to keep the people from rivalry among themselves; not to prize articles which are difficult to procure is the way to keep them from becoming thieves; not to show them what is likely to excite their desires is the way to keep their minds from disorder.

Therefore the sage, in the exercise of his government, empties their minds, fills their bellies, weakens their wills, and strengthens their bones.

He constantly tries to keep them without knowledge and without desire, and where there are those who have knowledge, to keep them from presuming to act on it. When there is this abstinence from action, good order is universal.

Confucianism: The Way of the Superior Man

▼▼▼

24 ▼ Confucius, *THE ANALECTS*

The Chinese refer to the period of Eastern Zhou as the *Age of a Hundred Schools*. Of the many schools of thought that flourished then, none has had a more substantial impact on Chinese culture than *Confucianism*, a philosophy of life ascribed to a teacher whom history identifies as *Confucius*.

Tradition records that this sage was born in 551 B.C.E. into the impoverished, lower-aristocratic family of Kong. He became a high-ranking civil servant in his native state of Lu but was forced into exile as a result of political intrigue. There followed ten years of wandering from state to state as he attempted without success to convince the princes of the states he visited to employ his theory of how to achieve a harmonious and just society. Disappointed at his inability to win over the lords of his day, Master Kong turned to teaching, seeking out students who showed promise of rising to eminent posts in the various states of China. In this way he hoped his philosophy of life and government — his moral Way — would transform Chinese society to the point that it returned to the values and practices of the age of the duke of Zhou, a twelfth-century B.C.E. legislator and consolidator of the Zhou Dynasty, whom Kong deeply admired. For his educational efforts, posterity accorded him the elegant title *Kongfuzi* (Very Reverend Master Kong), which Western scholars have Latinized into *Confucius*. Tradition further records that he died in 479 B.C.E.

Recently some historians have challenged this story. Several claim that the historical Confucius was not a scholar but a conservative warrior-noble who held very few of the values that tradition later ascribed to him. Several others even question the historicity of Confucius, concluding that the man was a fictional construct of a much later age. Notwithstanding these challenges, most historians still accept the overall outlines of the traditional story, even though they generally agree that later generations ascribed to Confucius some ideas and emphases that were never his. One such notion seems to have been *filial piety* (respect for one's parents and ancestors), which apparently played only a small role in Confucius' teachings but centuries later became the bedrock of Confucian ideology under the guidance of later Confucian philosophers.

Whatever else one infers about the historical Confucius, it is clear that he was someone who revered the old ways and followed them zealously. But the Master

Kong of tradition and probably of history went well beyond simple admiration and emulation. He took traditional Chinese values, such as propriety (regard for proper decorum), and turned them into moral principles. His genius was that he insisted human beings are moral creatures with social obligations and are, by that fact, obliged to comport themselves humanely and with integrity. He also taught that humans, or at least males, are capable of perfecting themselves as upright individuals. His ideal moral agent, so far as we can infer from the evidence, was the superior man who cultivated virtue through study and imitation of the moral Way of the past. This person by knowing the good would choose the good. What is more, he would act as an example to others, who would irresistibly follow the path he set along the Way of Goodness.

Confucius' pupils were few; we know the names of only about twenty. Although Master Kong appears to have been a widely respected sage, he was only one of many itinerant teachers of his age and probably not the most popular. There is reason to conclude he died believing himself a failure, but in time Confucianism became virtually synonymous with Chinese culture and played an almost equally important role in shaping Korean and Japanese thought.

As is true of so many great teachers whose words and example have placed a permanent stamp on a civilization, Confucius was not a productive writer. As far as we know, nothing he wrote or edited survives. Early Confucian disciples, however, managed to transmit to posterity a number of sayings ascribed to Master Kong and his immediate pupils. In time these were gathered into a book known as *The Analects*. We do not know which of these maxims Confucius actually uttered, but collectively they provide us with the best available view of Kongfuzi's teachings as remembered by those who knew and followed him.

As you study the following selections, which we have arranged by general topic for your study, note the role that *propriety* plays in Confucius' system. For him propriety meant much more than good manners or proper etiquette. It was the primary interior quality that set the superior man apart from all other humans.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. How does *propriety* serve as the keystone of Confucius' philosophical system?
2. What is Confucius' concept of the ideal state?
3. Who is the superior man? Is he born or made? If the latter, how?
4. According to Confucius, what was the most practical form of education, and what was its purpose? What do your answers suggest about Confucius' social views?
5. Consider the four topics Confucius did not discuss. Why do you suppose this was the case? What does this suggest about the man and his philosophy?
6. Confucius, like Laozi, speaks of the Way and claims to teach it. How does his Way differ from that of Daoism? What do you think his attitude was toward those who preached either the Way of Non-striving or the idea that there are no absolute standards of behavior?

PROPRIETY

The Master said, "Respectfulness, without the rules of propriety, becomes laborious bustle; carefulness, without the rules of propriety, becomes timidity; boldness, without the rules of propriety, becomes insubordination; straightforwardness, without the rules of propriety, becomes rudeness."

Yan Youan asked about perfect virtue. The Master said, "To subdue one's self and return to propriety is perfect virtue. If a man can for one day subdue himself and return to propriety, all under Heaven¹ will ascribe perfect virtue to him. Is the practice of perfect virtue from a man himself, or is it from others?"

Zhonggong asked about perfect virtue. The Master said, "It is, when you go abroad, to behave to every one as if you were receiving a great guest; to employ the people as if you were assisting at a great sacrifice; not to do to others as you would not wish done to yourself; to have no murmuring against you in the country, and none in the family." Zhonggong said, "Though I am deficient in intelligence and vigor, I will make it my business to practise this lesson."

IDEAL GOVERNMENT

The Master said, "When rulers love to observe the rules of propriety, the people respond readily to the calls on them for service."

The Master said, "If the people be led by laws, and uniformity sought to be given them by punishments,² they will try to avoid the punishment, but have no sense of shame.

"If they be led by virtue, and uniformity sought to be given them by the rules of propriety, they will have the sense of shame, and moreover will become good."

The Master said, "He who exercises government by means of his virtue may be compared to the north polar star, which keeps its place and all the stars turn towards it."

The duke Ai³ asked, saying, "What should be done in order to secure the submission of the people?" Confucius replied, "Advance the upright and set aside the crooked, then the people will submit. Advance the crooked and set aside the upright, then the people will not submit."

Ji Kang asked how to cause the people to reverence their ruler, to be faithful to him, and to go on to nerve themselves to virtue. The Master said, "Let him preside over them with gravity; — then they will reverence him. Let him be filial and kind to all; — then they will be faithful to him. Let him advance the good and teach the incompetent; — then they will eagerly seek to be virtuous."

Ji Kang asked Confucius about government. Confucius replied, "To govern means to rectify. If you lead on the people with correctness, who will dare not to be correct?"

Ji Kang asked Confucius about government, saying, "What do you say to killing the unprincipled for the good of the principled?" Confucius replied, "Sir, in carrying on your government, why should you use killing at all? Let your clear desires be for what is good, and the people will be good. The relation between superiors and inferiors is like that between the wind and the grass. The grass must bend, when the wind blows across it."

The Master said, "If a minister make his own conduct correct, what difficulty will he have in assisting in government? If he cannot rectify himself, what has he to do with rectifying others?"

¹All under Heaven are all the Chinese.

²This was the Way of the Legalists (see source 25).

³The lord of the state of Lu (r. 494–468 B.C.E.), whom several of Confucius' disciples served.

THE SUPERIOR MAN

"The superior man in everything considers righteousness to be essential. He performs it according to the rules of propriety. He brings it forth in humility. He completes it with sincerity. This is indeed a superior man.

"There are three things of which the superior man stands in awe. He stands in awe of the ordinances of Heaven. He stands in awe of great men. He stands in awe of the words of sages. The inferior man does not know the ordinances of Heaven, and consequently does not stand in awe of them. He is disrespectful to great men. He makes sport of the words of sages.

Zi Gong asked what constituted the superior man. The Master said, "He acts before he speaks, and afterward speaks according to his actions."

The Master said, "The mind of the superior man is conversant with propriety; the mind of the inferior man is conversant with gain."⁴

The Master said, "If the will be set on virtue, there will be no practice of wickedness."

The Master said, "Riches and honors are what men desire. If it cannot be obtained in the proper way, they should not be held. Poverty and mean-

ness are what men dislike. If it cannot be obtained in the proper way, they should not be avoided.

"If a superior man abandon virtue, how can he fulfill the requirements of that name?

"The superior man does not, even for the space of a single meal, act contrary to virtue. In moments of haste, he cleaves to it. In seasons of danger, he cleaves to it."

The Master said, "By nature, men are nearly alike; by practice, they get to be wide apart."

The Master said, "By extensively studying all learning, and keeping himself under the restraint of the rules of propriety, one may thus likewise not err from what is right."

SPIRITS

The subjects on which the Master did not talk, were extraordinary things,⁵ feats of strength,⁶ disorder, and spiritual beings.⁷

Ji Lu asked about serving the spirits of the dead. The Master said, "While you are not able to serve men, how can you serve their spirits?" Ji Lu added, "I venture to ask about death?" He was answered, "While you do not know life, how can you know about death?"

⁴This is a pun. The characters for both *propriety* and *gain* are pronounced *li*.

⁵Extraordinary phenomena that cause delight and wonder among the ignorant.

⁶Confucius and his disciples had only contempt for persons

who exercised power by virtue of physical strength. The Confucians believed in the exclusive exercise of moral and intellectual power.

⁷The spirits of the ancestors.

Legalism in Theory and Practice: The Way of the State



25 ▼ *Han Fei,*

*THE WRITINGS OF MASTER HAN FEI, and
Sima Qian,*

THE RECORDS OF THE GRAND HISTORIAN

Daoism offered no active political program, whereas Confucius and his disciples preached a doctrine of benevolent reform based on virtuous imitation of the past. A third school of thought that emerged in the chaos of the late Zhou Era was *Legalism*, which rejected both the Way of nature, as embraced by the Daoists, and Confucianism's emphasis on the primacy of the moral Way of antiquity. Legalist writers, to the contrary, emphasized law as government's formulative force and advocated a radical restructuring of society in ways that were totally rational and up-to-date.

Legalism reached its apogee in the late third century B.C.E. in the writings of *Han Feizi* (Master Han Fei) and the policies of *Emperor Qin Shi Huangdi* (r. 221–210). Han Fei was a prince of the state of Han who defected to its chief rival, the state of Qin, but eventually he ran afoul of Qin's chief minister and was forced to commit suicide in 233 B.C.E. Before he died, he composed a number of essays on how to construct a stable and peaceful state. The first two selections present Han Fei's major principles of political philosophy.

The third selection comes from the history of early China composed by *Sima Qian* (ca. 145–after 91 B.C.E.). In 107 B.C.E., Sima Qian was elevated to the office of Grand Historian of the Han Court, but even before rising to this position, he had avidly collected historical records during his travels on imperial service. His initial project as Grand Historian was to collect systematically additional sources, especially from the imperial library, and to verify his facts. In 104 he began the process of composition, a labor that lasted until 91 B.C.E. The result was a history monumental in scope that traced China's fortunes from the age of the legendary Five Sage Emperors, who preceded the Xia and Shang dynasties, to his own day.

The Chinese rightly consider *The Records of the Grand Historian* to be traditional China's greatest piece of historical writing. Sima Qian aimed at telling the whole truth, insofar as he could discover it, and in pursuit of that truth he scoured all available archives. As he composed his work, he included verbatim many of the records he had discovered, thereby providing modern historians a wealth of documentary evidence that would otherwise have been lost, for many of the sources Sima Qian quoted, paraphrased, and cited exist today only in his history. In this excerpt the Grand Historian quotes an inscribed monument that the First Emperor, Qin Shi Huangdi, set up to proclaim his accomplishments.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. In Han Fei's ideal state which is the supreme governing authority: the will of the ruler or the law?
2. What are the "two handles," and how important are they to a Legalist state?
3. What roles do individuality and private initiative play in Han Fei's ideal state?
4. Of what accomplishments does the First Emperor boast?
5. What principles and policies are reflected in these inscribed words?
6. Imagine a conversation among a Legalist, a Daoist, and a Confucian regarding the First Emperor's monument. Now compose that conversation, giving each person the best possible arguments that reflect his particular school of thought.

HAVING REGULATIONS

No country is permanently strong. Nor is any country permanently weak. If conformers to law are strong, the country is strong; if conformers to law are weak, the country is weak. . . .

Any ruler able to expel private crookedness and uphold public law, finds the people safe and the state in order; and any ruler able to expunge private action and act on public law, finds his army strong and his enemy weak. So, find out men following the discipline of laws and regulations, and place them above the body of officials. Then the sovereign cannot be deceived by anybody with fraud and falsehood. . . .

Therefore, the intelligent sovereign makes the law select men and makes no arbitrary promotion himself. He makes the law measure merits and makes no arbitrary regulation himself. In consequence, able men cannot be obscured, bad characters cannot be disguised; falsely praised fellows cannot be advanced, wrongly defamed people cannot be degraded. . . .

To govern the state by law is to praise the right and blame the wrong.

The law does not fawn on the noble. . . . Whatever the law applies to, the wise cannot reject nor can the brave defy. Punishment for fault never skips ministers, reward for good never misses commoners. Therefore, to correct the faults of the high, to rebuke the vices of the low, to suppress disorders, to decide against mistakes, to

subdue the arrogant, to straighten the crooked, and to unify the folkways of the masses, nothing could match the law. To warn the officials and overawe the people, to rebuke obscenity and danger, and to forbid falsehood and deceit, nothing could match penalty. If penalty is severe, the noble cannot discriminate against the humble. If law is definite, the superiors are esteemed and not violated. If the superiors are not violated, the sovereign will become strong and able to maintain the proper course of government. Such was the reason why the early kings esteemed Legalism and handed it down to posterity. Should the lord of men discard law and practice selfishness, high and low would have no distinction.

THE TWO HANDLES

The means whereby the intelligent ruler controls his ministers are two handles only. The two handles are chastisement and commendation. What are meant by chastisement and commendation? To inflict death or torture upon culprits, is called chastisement; to bestow encouragements or rewards on men of merit, is called commendation.

Ministers are afraid of censure and punishment but fond of encouragement and reward. Therefore, if the lord of men uses the handles of chastisement and commendation, all ministers will dread his severity and turn to his liberality. The villainous ministers of the age are different. To

men they hate they would by securing the handle of chastisement from the sovereign ascribe crimes; on men they love they would by securing the handle of commendation from the sovereign bestow rewards. Now supposing the lord of men placed the authority of punishment and the profit of reward not in his hands but let the ministers administer the affairs of reward and punishment instead, then everybody in the country would fear the ministers and slight the ruler, and turn to the ministers and away from the ruler. This is the calamity of the ruler's loss of the handles of chastisement and commendation.

THE FIRST EMPEROR'S MONUMENT

The emperor had a tower built on Mount Langya and a stone inscription set up to praise the power of Qin and make clear his will. The inscription read:

A new age is inaugurated by the Emperor;
Rules and measures are rectified,
The myriad things set in order,
Human affairs are made clear
And there is harmony between fathers
 and sons.
The Emperor in his sagacity, benevolence
 and justice
Has made all laws and principles manifest.
He set forth to pacify the east,
To inspect officers and men;
This great task accomplished
He visited the coast.
Great are the Emperor's achievements,
Men attend diligently to basic tasks,
Farming is encouraged, secondary
 pursuits discouraged,
All the common people prosper;
All men under the sky
Toil with a single purpose;
Tools and measures are made uniform,

The written script is standardized;
Wherever the sun and moon shine,
Wherever one can go by boat or by carriage,
Men carry out their orders
And satisfy their desires;
For our Emperor in accordance with the time
Has regulated local customs,
Made waterways and divided up the land.
Caring for the common people,
He works day and night without rest;
He defines the laws, leaving nothing in doubt,
Making known what is forbidden.
The local officials have their duties,
Administration is smoothly carried out,
All is done correctly, all according to plan.
The Emperor in his wisdom
Inspects all four quarters of his realm;
High and low, noble and humble,
None dare overshoot the mark;
No evil or impropriety is allowed,
All strive to be good men and true,
And exert themselves in tasks great and small;
None dares to idle or ignore his duties,
But in far-off, remote places
Serious and decorous administrators
Work steadily, just and loyal.
Great is the virtue of our Emperor
Who pacifies all four corners of the earth,
Who punishes traitors, roots out evil men,
And with profitable measures
 brings prosperity.
Tasks are done at the proper season,
All things flourish and grow;
The common people know peace
And have laid aside weapons and armor;
Kinsmen care for each other,
There are no robbers or thieves;
Men delight in his rule,
All understanding the law and discipline.
The universe entire
Is our Emperor's realm,
Extending west to the Desert,¹
South to where the houses face north,

¹Either the Gobi Desert to the north or, less likely, the great Taklamakan Desert to the west.

East to the East Ocean,²
 North to beyond Daxia;³
 Wherever human life is found,
 All acknowledge his suzerainty,
 His achievements surpass those of the
 Five Emperors,⁴

His kindness reaches even the beasts of
 the field;
 All creatures benefit from his virtue,
 All live in peace at home.

²The Pacific.

³A region of Central Asia shared by the modern states of Turkistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Afghanistan. The Qin state did not stretch that far westward.

⁴The mythical Five Sage Emperors of predynastic China.

Yin and Yang and the Dao of Good Health



26 ▼ *THE YELLOW EMPEROR'S CLASSIC OF MEDICINE*

Qin Shi Huangdi boasted in his stone monument that his achievements surpassed those of the Five Sage Emperors. Daoists and Confucians would not have agreed, especially with regard to the deeds of the fabled *Yellow Emperor*. The last of the mythic Three Sovereigns and the first of the Five Sage Emperors, the Yellow Emperor, who supposedly reigned in the twenty-seventh century B.C.E., was credited with fashioning China's first state and bestowing on its culture such gifts as wooden houses, ceramics, and writing, whereas his wife was credited with creating the first silk cloth. Daoists claimed the Yellow Emperor had articulated the basic principles of their philosophy, and Chinese physicians also claimed the Yellow Emperor as their own, believing he had laid down the foundations of their healing art.

The earliest known textbook of Chinese medicine is *The Yellow Emperor's Classic of Medicine*, which was written at some unknown time between maybe 1000 and 300 B.C.E. All we know for certain is that it was known and used during the Han Era (202 B.C.E.–220 C.E.), and scholars are almost equally certain that it could not have been composed anywhere near the supposed time of the Yellow Emperor. One indicator of this is the classic's focus on the cosmological theory of *Yin* and *Yang*, a way of explaining the natural world that developed during the Zhou Era.

The cosmology of Yin and Yang is based on the theory that the universe is composed of two basic principles: Yang is the male principle of light and life, the day and the sun, strength and activity; Yin is the female principle of darkness and death, the night and the moon, weakness and passivity. Heaven is the creation of Yang; Earth is the creation of Yin. Despite the fact that they stand in opposition, these two principles are not at war with one another; to the contrary, they complement and complete one another. Every part of nature, including humans, contains its unique blend of Yin and Yang, which means that in each instance one of these two principles will predominate over the other, thereby defining that part

of nature's essence and characteristics. From this it follows that maintaining the natural harmonious relationship of Yin and Yang that is special to each part of nature is essential for preserving its well-being and proper function.

In the following selection we see how the Chinese translated this cosmological theory into a philosophy of holistic, preventative medicine. Here we encounter an explanation of how the wise person must act in conformity with the four seasons, each of which is a manifestation of the cyclic interplay of Yin and Yang: Spring is when Yang is on the rise and Yin on the wane; summer is the season of Yang when Yin is dormant; fall is when Yin is on the rise and Yang on the wane; winter is the season of Yin when Yang is dormant.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. How does this treatise offer a program for psychological and physical well-being?
2. Chinese philosophy was focused on the maintenance of harmony. Are the medical theories articulated in this treatise consistent with that focus? Please be specific in your answer.
3. This treatise speaks of conforming to the Dao. Review source 23. Are the principles contained in the Yellow Emperor's classic consistent with the principles articulated by Laozi?
4. Consider the following terms: secular, religious, naturalistic, scientific. Evaluate the medical theories contained in this treatise in relation to each term. Which, if any, best characterizes this type of medicine? If you think none does, what term would you apply? Defend your choice.

Great Treatise on the Harmony of the Atmosphere of the Four Seasons with the Human Spirit

The three months of *Spring* are called the period of the beginning and development of life. The breaths of Heaven and Earth are prepared to give birth; thus everything is developing and flourishing.

After a night of sleep people should get up early in the morning; they should walk briskly around the yard; they should loosen their hair and slow down their movements; by these means they can fulfill their wish to live healthfully.

During this period one's body should be encouraged to live and not be killed; one should give to it freely and not take away from it; one should reward it and not punish it.

All this is in harmony with the breath of Spring and all this is the method for the protection of one's life.

Those who disobey the laws of Spring will be punished with an injury of the liver. For them the following Summer will bring chills and bad changes; thus they will have little to support their development in Summer.

The three months of *Summer* are called the period of luxurious growth. The breaths of Heaven and Earth intermingle and are beneficial. Everything is in bloom and begins to bear fruit.

After a night of sleep people should get up early in the morning. They should not weary during daytime and they should not allow their minds to become angry.

They should enable the best parts of their body and spirit to develop; they should enable their

breath to communicate with the outside world; and they should act as though they loved everything outside.

All this is in harmony with the atmosphere of Summer and all this is the method for the protection of one's development.

Those who disobey the laws of Summer will be punished with an injury of the heart. For them Fall will bring intermittent fevers; thus they will have little to support them for harvest in Fall; and hence, at Winter solstice they will suffer from grave disease.

The three months of *Fall* are called the period of tranquillity of one's conduct. The atmosphere of Heaven is quick and the atmosphere of the Earth is clear.

People should retire early at night and rise early in the morning with the rooster. They should have their minds at peace in order to lessen the punishment of Fall. Soul and spirit should be gathered together in order to make the breath of Fall tranquil; and to keep their lungs pure they should not give vent to their desires.

All this is in harmony with the atmosphere of Fall and all this is the method for the protection of one's harvest.

Those who disobey the laws of Fall will be punished with an injury of the lungs. For them Winter will bring indigestion and diarrhoea; thus they will have little to support their storing of Winter.

The three months of *Winter* are called the period of closing and storing. Water freezes and the Earth cracks open. One should not disturb one's Yang.¹

People should retire early at night and rise late in the morning and they should wait for the ris-

ing of the sun. They should suppress and conceal their wishes, as though they had no internal purpose, as though they had been fulfilled. People should try to escape the cold and they should seek warmth, they should not perspire upon the skin, they should let themselves be deprived of breath of the cold.

All this is in harmony with the atmosphere of Winter and all this is the method for the protection of one's storing.

Those who disobey the laws of Winter will suffer an injury of the kidneys; for them Spring will bring impotence,² and they will produce little. . . .

The sages followed the laws of nature and therefore their bodies were free from strange diseases; they did not lose anything which they had received by nature and their spirit of life was never exhausted.

Those who do not conform with the breath of Spring will not bring to life the region of the lesser Yang.³ The atmosphere of their liver will change their constitution.

Those who do not conform with the atmosphere of Summer will not develop their greater Yang.⁴ The atmosphere of their heart will become empty.

Those who do not conform with the atmosphere of Fall will not harvest their greater Yin.⁵ The atmosphere of their lungs will be blocked from the lower burning space.⁶

Those who do not conform with the atmosphere of Winter will not store their lesser Yin.⁷ The atmosphere of their kidneys will be isolated and decreased.

Thus the interaction of the four seasons and the interaction of Yin and Yang is the founda-

¹Yang is dormant and should be allowed to rest.

²The kidneys were believed to be the organ from which the sexual life force emanated.

³The human body has three regions, and each region has two divisions: a Yang and a Yin. Thus, every human has three Yin subregions and three Yang subregions. The subregion of the lesser Yang involves the gall bladder and the liver.

⁴The subregion of the greater Yang involves the small intestines and the heart.

⁵The greater Yin involves the lungs and the lower intestines.

⁶According to traditional Chinese anatomy, the body has three burning spaces — an upper, a middle, and a lower — that control their respective areas of the body. They also serve as a super cleansing system for the body. Apparently in this case the lungs will not be able to cleanse themselves properly.

⁷The lesser Yin involves the kidneys and the bladder.

tion of everything in creation. Hence the sages conceived and developed their Yang in Spring and Summer, and conceived and developed their Yin in Fall and Winter in order to follow the rule of rules; and thus, together with everything in creation, maintained themselves at the gate of life and development.

Those who rebel against the basic rules of the universe sever their own roots and ruin their true selves. Yin and Yang, the two principles in nature, and the four seasons are the beginning and the end of everything and they are also the cause of life and death. Those who disobey the laws of the universe will give rise to calamities and visitations, while those who follow the laws of the universe remain free from dangerous illness, for they are the ones who have obtained Dao, the Right Way.

Dao was practiced by the sages and admired

by the ignorant people. Obedience to the laws of Yin and Yang means life; disobedience means death. The obedient ones will rule while the rebels will be in disorder and confusion. Anything contrary to harmony with nature is disobedience and means rebellion to nature.

Hence the sages did not treat those who were already ill; they instructed those who were not yet ill. They did not want to rule those who were already rebellious; they guided those who were not yet rebellious. This is the meaning of the entire preceding discussion. To administer medicines to diseases which have already developed and to suppress revolts which have already developed is comparable to the behavior of those persons who begin to dig a well after they have become thirsty, and of those who begin to cast weapons after they have already engaged in battle. Would these actions not be too late?

Hellenic Civilization: A Rational Inquiry into Life

Early in the sixth century B.C.E., a small group of Greek intellectuals in Ionia began to challenge age-old mythic ways of explaining the workings of the universe by looking at the world as an objective phenomenon that could be studied in a rational, systematic manner. These thinkers, who sought to discover the physical underpinnings of the universe, are acknowledged as ancient Hellas's first philosophers and scientists and the people who established the Greek intellectual tradition of rational inquiry into all aspects of the physical and moral world.

As important as reason was in the formation of Greek thought, it never threatened to totally displace myth, mysticism, and religion. We would very much misunderstand Greek civilization by concluding that rational inquiry dominated every element of Greek life from the sixth century onward. Indeed, the nonrational permeated Greek society. This fact should not be surprising nor should it cause us to undervalue the achievements of Greek rationalists, whose modes of analysis became a hallmark of Greek civilization.

The period from about 750 B.C.E. down to the death of Alexander the Great in 323 B.C.E. is known as the *Hellenic Age* because, as we have seen, the people we call *Greeks* referred to themselves as *Hellenes* and their land as *Hellas*. (It was the Romans who began the tradition of calling all Hellenes *Greeks*.)

During the Hellenic Age the Greek World was very much a frontier society along the western periphery of the ancient civilized world. As a result, the Greeks

were able to draw from the experiences of their more deeply rooted neighbors while simultaneously enjoying a certain amount of freedom to experiment culturally, especially in the areas of politics, thought, and art. This age was characterized by general Greek independence from foreign domination, political decentralization, intense rivalry among Hellas's many city-states, and a deep-seated ethnocentrism and even contempt for the non-Hellenic World. The Hellenes coined the term *barbarian* to refer to all non-Greek speakers, even the most civilized, because their alien languages sounded to Greek ears like so much babble, or *bar-bar*. The two dominating events of the Hellenic Age were the Persian Wars (499–450 B.C.E.) and the Peloponnesian War (431–404 B.C.E.). In the first, Greeks, under the leadership of Athens and Sparta, successfully withstood the threat of Persian domination. In the latter, again under Athenian and Spartan leadership, the whole Greek World was embroiled in a bitter family bloodletting. Despite the wars that dominated so much of the fifth century B.C.E., this hundred-year period is rightly regarded as the classical era of Hellenic civilization — an age when Hellas's intellectuals and artists soared to new heights as they explored the place of humans in a world that they confidently assumed was understandable and human-sized.

Hellenic Medicine



27 ▼ *Hippocrates, ON THE SACRED DISEASE*

No matter how much they differed among themselves, early Greek scientists shared two basic assumptions: The world is a physical entity governed by regular, natural laws and not by mysterious supernatural forces or divine whims; and the human mind, unaided by magic or divine revelation, can understand how those laws function.

One area of Hellenic science that proved especially fruitful was medicine, especially as pioneered by the physicians of the island of Cos, and of the healers of Cos, the most famous in history and legend was *Hippocrates*. For all of his fame and reputed dominance in his field, we know very little about Hippocrates' life. Born on Cos around 460 B.C.E., he served as a member of that community's Guild of Aesculapius, a group of physicians who traced their origin back to the priesthood of the god of healing. Hippocrates' abilities as a practitioner and teacher of medicine eventually earned him a pan-Hellenic reputation, and he found himself traveling from city to city teaching his art and science — a science that stressed careful clinical observation of the nature and course of diseases. A late tradition holds that the Master Physician died in Thessaly in northern Greece around 377 B.C.E.

Succeeding generations of physicians looked to Hippocrates as the preeminent figure in their profession, and consequently his legend and stature grew beyond simple human proportions as the years passed. By 300 B.C.E. some seventy-two books were ascribed to him, but this Hippocratic body of medical knowledge clearly shows the hands of many different authors. It is impossible to say precisely

which, if any, of these books Hippocrates composed, but it is reasonable to assume that they represent the medical tradition that he and generations of his students practiced and taught.

An integral part of that tradition was the theory of bodily *humors*. The physicians of Cos concluded from their observations of disease that the body contains four basic fluids, or humors: blood, phlegm, black bile, and yellow bile. Based on this, they further concluded that an excess of any humor — by reason of hereditary factors, environment, or accident — causes both psychic and physical imbalance. Depending on the humor that has thrown the body out of balance, the patient becomes sanguine, phlegmatic, melancholy, or bilious. Moreover, given human variability, no one's humors are ever in perfect balance; some humor always is dominant, which explains why people have different personalities and physical qualities. When, however, the imbalance becomes so great as to cause clinical illness, the physician must intervene. The Greek physician's art and science consisted of helping the body re-establish its natural harmony by administering or withholding foods and medicines that either reduced or increased one or more of the humors.

This theory underlies the document that appears here, an excerpt from *On the Sacred Disease*, one of the earliest treatises within the body of medical texts ascribed to Hippocrates. Here the author, putatively Hippocrates, deals with the issue of epilepsy.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. Why does Hippocrates reject the notion that epilepsy comes from the gods?
2. How does he propose to cure this ailment?
3. Consider question 4 for source 26. Apply that same question to *On the Sacred Disease*.
4. Compare Chinese medicine as illustrated in source 26 with Hellenic medicine as illustrated in this source. Which strike you as more significant, the differences or the similarities? What conclusions follow from your answer?

In regard to the disease called "sacred," it seems to me to be no more divine or sacred than other diseases but has a natural cause from which it originates, like other afflictions. People regard its nature and cause as divine out of ignorance and credulity, because it is unlike other diseases. This notion of its divinity persists by virtue of people's inability to comprehend it and the simplicity of the means by which it is cured, for those afflicted are supposedly freed from it by purifications and incantations. If people reckon it di-

vine because it incites awe, then instead of one sacred disease there would be many. As I will show, other diseases are no less awe-inspiring and strange, yet no one considers them sacred. . . . For example, one can see people grow mad and demented for no apparent reason and doing many strange things. I have known many persons to groan and cry out in their sleep . . . some jumping up and rushing out of doors, all deprived of their reason until they wake up. Afterward they are as healthy and rational as before, although

pale and weak. And this will occur not once but frequently. There are many similar phenomena that it would be tedious to enumerate.

In my view, they who first associated this disease with the gods were people just like our present-day magicians, purifiers, charlatans, and quacks, who claim great piety and superior knowledge. Such persons, using superstition as camouflage for their own inability to offer any help, proclaimed the disease sacred . . . and instituted a method of treatment that protected them, namely purifications, incantations, and enforced abstinence from bathing and from many types of food. . . . Their course of treatment forbids the patient to have a black robe, because black is symbolic of death, or to sleep on a goatskin, or to wear one, or to put one foot on another, or one hand on another. All these things are reputed to be impediments to healing. . . . If the patient recovers they reap the honor and credit; if the patient dies, they have a perfect defense: The gods, not they, are to blame, seeing as they had administered nothing to eat or drink in the way of medicine, and they had not overheated the patient with baths. . . . To my way of thinking, if this course of treatment were correct, no Libyan living in the interior [of Africa] would be free of the disease, since they all sleep on goatskins and live on goat meat. . . . Then again, if such things, when administered as food, aggravate the disease, and if it is cured by abstinence from them, then the disease cannot be divine in origin, and the rites of purification provide no benefit. It is the food which is either beneficial or harmful. . . . Therefore, they who attempt to cure this disease in such a manner appear to me to be incapable of believing the disease is sacred or divine. . . .

Neither do I believe it to be a worthy opinion to maintain that a human body is polluted by the divine: the most impure substance being polluted by the most pure. . . . For it is the

godhead that purifies, makes holy, and cleanses us from the greatest and most wicked of our offenses. . . . When we enter temples and the groves of gods we are sprinkled with holy water, not as a pollution but as a means of cleansing whatever pollution we had. And this principle seems to me to be the same in regard to purifications [offered by charlatan healers].

Consequently, this disease seems to me to be no more divine than others. It has the same nature and cause as other diseases. It is also no less curable than other diseases. . . . The key to its origin, as is the case with other diseases, lies in heredity. . . . There is nothing to prevent it from happening that where one or the other parent suffers from this malady, some of their children likewise suffer from it. . . . Another strong proof that this disease is no more divine in origin than any other is that it afflicts those who are by nature phlegmatic,¹ but it does not attack the bilious.² If this disease were more divine than other diseases, it should afflict all groups equally, making no distinction between the bilious and the phlegmatic. . . .

Since the brain, as the primary center of sensation and of the spirits, perceives whatever occurs in the body, if any unusual change takes place in the air, due to the seasons, the brain is changed by the state of the air. . . . And the disease called "sacred" arises from . . . those things that enter and leave the body, such as cold, the sun, and winds, which are constantly changing and never at rest. . . . Therefore the physician should understand and distinguish each individual situation, so that at one time he might add nourishment, at another time withhold it. In this disease, as in all others, he must endeavor not to feed the disease, but he must attempt to wear it out by administering whatever is most contrary to each disease and not that which favors and is allied to it. For it grows vigorous and increases through that which is allied to it, but it wears out and

¹A calm temperament that can reach sluggishness due to excessive phlegm.

²Those who, by reason of the dominance of bile in their systems, have peevish, sour-tempered dispositions.

disappears under the administration of whatever is opposed to it.³ Whoever is knowledgeable enough to render a person humid or dry, hot or cold by regimen can also cure this disease, if the

physician recognizes the proper season for administering remedies. The physician can do so without attention to purifications, spells, and all other forms of hocus-pocus.

³Specific foods and ministrations stimulate the production of specific humors; others reduce them.

The Athenian as Citizen



28 ▼ *Thucydides*, THE HISTORY OF THE PELOPONNESIAN WAR

During the eighth century B.C.E., Homer, the putative author of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, interpreted the past through the medium of poetic myth. By the mid fifth century certain Hellenic researchers were recapturing and interpreting the past through the more prosaic but accurate medium of history. The word *historia* is Greek and means “knowledge achieved through inquiry.” As we have seen, the Hebrews and Persians had already evolved a sense of divinely directed history. However, it was the Greeks who became western Eurasia’s first students of secular history. That means researchers who systematically studied worldly affairs divorced from any consideration of divine intervention or control. The particular genius of Greek *historiography* (the writing of history) was that certain thinkers, largely beginning with *Herodotus* (ca. 484–424 B.C.E.), believed that human events could be reconstructed and made comprehensible through careful research into the human record.

One such student of the human past was *Thucydides* (ca. 460–400 B.C.E.), widely reputed to have been classical Hellas’s greatest historian. Thucydides was a citizen of Athens in an age when Hellenic civilization was dominated by rivalry among its many different city-states, or *poleis* (the plural of *polis*). During Thucydides’ youth and young manhood, Athens was led by *Pericles*, who from 461 through 429 B.C.E. was a dominant force in shaping Athenian democracy.

Contrary to modern popular belief, democracy was not common in the Hellenic World. Hellas’s competing poleis were organized along diverse political, social, military, and economic lines. Some were dictatorships, many were oligarchies (rule by small factions), and very few, like Athens, were democracies. Each of classical Hellas’s poleis, including democratic Athens, were brotherhoods of warriors organized for the primary purpose of waging war — usually against other Hellenes — and organization for war played a major role in directing the course of a polis’s political structures. The fact that Athens relied primarily on its navy raised significantly the importance of Athens’s poorest citizens, who could not afford the time or the expense of serving as heavy-armed footsoldiers but could and did serve as rowers and marines in the city’s fleet. With the new status

of these poor citizens came political power, and under Pericles the city took its final steps toward full participatory democracy, although there was still plenty of opportunity for persuasive and gifted citizens such as Pericles to play leading roles in directing the city's fortunes.

In 431 B.C.E. Pericles led Athens into the Peloponnesian War against the oligarchic polis of Sparta and its allies. The war dragged on for a generation, ending in 404 with a Spartan victory. In the early stages of the conflict it had seemed as though there was no way Athens could lose the war, given its command of the sea-lanes. In the winter of 431/430 a confident Athens paused to honor those citizens who had fallen in battle during the first year of fighting and called upon Pericles, its unofficial First Citizen, to deliver the eulogy. Pericles used the occasion to praise the polis for which those citizens had lived and died and, by extension, to speak well of his own policies.

Thucydides undoubtedly attended that funeral and perhaps dreamed of his own glorious service to Athens. Six years later Thucydides commanded a small naval squadron that failed to relieve a besieged Athenian infantry force, and for that failure he was forced into exile. An avid student of human affairs, especially politics, Thucydides used his enforced retirement to study the war and write its history. As he noted in the opening lines of his *The History*, he had begun writing about the war from its outbreak because he believed it would prove to be the most memorable conflict in all of Hellenic history, outstripping even the Trojan and Persian wars in magnitude. His purpose was simple: to provide all Hellenes with "an everlasting possession," whose careful study would enable them to avoid similar errors in the future.

In his attempt to create an aura of dramatic verisimilitude, thereby assuring his work's being read and preserved, Thucydides employed the convention of including numerous speeches into his *History*. As he admitted, the speeches were not verbatim accounts, but he claimed to preserve the sense of either what was said or what he judged should have been said on a particular occasion. Because Pericles' Funeral Oration was such a public and memorable speech, there is good reason to believe Thucydides has preserved the essence of Pericles' message. That message tells us a good deal about Hellenic secular culture in the fifth century B.C.E.

Just as telling is Thucydides' description of the plague that ravaged Athens in the summer of 430. Plato (source 30) implies that Hippocrates visited and taught medicine in Athens. Although it is not possible to verify this, it is clear that Hippocratic medical principles were part of Athens's intellectual atmosphere by the end of the fifth century B.C.E. It is equally clear that Thucydides had enjoyed all of the educational benefits available to a wealthy Athenian citizen, and that included at least an introduction to Hippocratic medicine.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. How does Pericles define Athenian democracy? According to him, what sort of citizens does this democracy breed, and how does Athens help its citizens achieve their full potential?

2. In his idealized portrait of Athens, Pericles contrasts Athens's spirit with that of Sparta. According to him, how do the Spartans live? As Pericles sees it, what is wrong with the Spartan way of life?
3. Why is Athens, in Pericles' words, "the school of Hellas"?
4. How, if at all, does Pericles' speech provide evidence of Hellenic preoccupation with the human individual, the life of the polis, and rational analysis?
5. In what ways, if at all, does Thucydides' description of the plague conform to the principles of Hippocratic medicine?
6. How, if at all, does Thucydides' description of the consequences of the plague serve as a commentary on Pericles' speech? Please be specific.
7. Compose a commentary on this entire excerpt, the speech and the plague sequence, by either Confucius or Qin Shi Huangdi.

During the . . . winter, . . . the funeral of those who first fell in this war was celebrated by the Athenians at the public charge. . . . Over those who were the first buried Pericles was chosen to speak. At the fitting moment he advanced from the sepulcher to a lofty stage, which had been erected in order that he might be heard as far as possible by the multitude, and spoke as follows: . . .

"I will speak first of our ancestors, for it is right and becoming that now, when we are lamenting the dead, a tribute should be paid to their memory. There has never been a time when they did not inhabit this land, which by their valor they have handed down from generation to generation, and we have received from them a free state. But if they were worthy of praise, still more were our fathers, who added to their inheritance, and after many a struggle transmitted to us their sons this great empire. And we ourselves assembled here today, who are still most of us in the vigor of life, have chiefly done the work of improvement, and have richly endowed our city with all things, so that she is sufficient for herself both in peace and war. Of the military exploits by which our various possessions were acquired, or of the energy with which we or our fathers drove back the tide of war, Hellenic or Barbarian, I will not speak; for the tale would be long and is familiar to you. But before I praise the dead, I should like to point out by what principles of action we rose to power, and under what

institutions and through what manner of life our empire became great. For I conceive that such thoughts are not unsuited to the occasion, and that this numerous assembly of citizens and strangers may profitably listen to them.

"Our form of government does not enter into rivalry with the institutions of others. We do not copy our neighbors, but are an example to them. It is true that we are called a democracy, for the administration is in the hands of the many and not of the few. But while the law secures equal justice to all alike in their private disputes, the claim of excellence is also recognized; and when a citizen is in any way distinguished, he is preferred to the public service, not as a matter of privilege, but as the reward of merit. Neither is poverty a bar, but a man may benefit his country whatever be the obscurity of his condition. There is no exclusiveness in our public life, and in our private intercourse we are not suspicious of one another, nor angry with our neighbor if he does what he likes; we do not put on sour looks at him which, though harmless, are not pleasant. While we are thus unconstrained in our private intercourse, a spirit of reverence pervades our public acts; we are prevented from doing wrong by respect for authority and for the laws, having a special regard to those which are ordained for the protection of the injured as well as to those unwritten laws which bring upon the transgressor of them the reprobation of the general sentiment.

"And we have not forgotten to provide for our weary spirits many relaxations from toil; we have regular games and sacrifices throughout the year; at home the style of our life is refined; and the delight which we daily feel in all these things helps to banish melancholy. Because of the greatness of our city the fruits of the whole earth flow in upon us; so that we enjoy the goods of other countries as freely as of our own.

"Then, again, our military training is in many respects superior to that of our adversaries. Our city is thrown open to the world, and we never expel a foreigner or prevent him from seeing or learning anything of which the secret if revealed to an enemy might profit him. We rely not upon management or trickery, but upon our own hearts and hands. And in the matter of education, whereas they from early youth are always undergoing laborious exercises which are to make them brave, we live at ease, and yet are equally ready to face the perils which they face. . . .

"If then we prefer to meet danger with a light heart but without laborious training, and with a courage which is gained by habit and not enforced by law, are we not greatly the gainers? Since we do not anticipate the pain, although, when the hour comes, we can be as brave as those who never allow themselves to rest; and thus too our city is equally admirable in peace and in war. For we are lovers of the beautiful, yet simple in our tastes, and we cultivate the mind without loss of manliness. Wealth we employ, not for talk and ostentation, but when there is a real use for it. To avow poverty with us is no disgrace; the true disgrace is in doing nothing to avoid it. An Athenian citizen does not neglect the state because he takes care of his own household; and even those of us who are engaged in business have a very fair idea of politics. We alone regard a man who takes no interest in public affairs, not as a harmless, but as a useless character; and if few of us are originators, we are all sound judges of a policy. The great impediment to action is, in our opinion, not discussion, but the want of that knowledge which is gained by discussion preparatory to action. For we have a peculiar

power of thinking before we act and of acting too, whereas other men are courageous from ignorance but hesitate upon reflection. And they are surely to be esteemed the bravest spirits who, having the clearest sense both of the pains and pleasures of life, do not on that account shrink from danger. . . . To sum up: I say that Athens is the school of Hellas, and that the individual Athenian in his own person seems to have the power of adapting himself to the most varied forms of action with the utmost versatility and grace. This is no passing and idle word, but truth and fact; and the assertion is verified by the position to which these qualities have raised the state. For in the hour of trial Athens alone among her contemporaries is superior to the report of her. No enemy who comes against her is indignant at the reverses which he sustains at the hands of such a city; no subject complains that his masters are unworthy of him. And we shall assuredly not be without witnesses; there are mighty monuments of our power which will make us the wonder of this and of succeeding ages; we shall not need the praises of Homer or of any other panegyrist whose poetry may please for the moment, although his representation of the facts will not bear the light of day. For we have compelled every land and every sea to open a path for our valor, and have everywhere planted eternal memorials of our friendship and of our enmity. Such is the city for whose sake these men nobly fought and died; they could not bear the thought that she might be taken from them; and every one of us who survives should gladly toil on her behalf.

"I have dwelt upon the greatness of Athens because I want to show you that we are contending for a higher prize than those who enjoy none of these privileges, and to establish by manifest proof the merit of these men whom I am now commemorating. Their loftiest praise has been already spoken. For in magnifying the city I have magnified them, and men like them whose virtues made her glorious. . . ."

Such was the order of the funeral celebrated in this winter, with the end of which ended the first

year of the Peloponnesian War. As soon as summer returned, the Peloponnesian army¹ . . . invaded Attica,² where they established themselves and ravaged the country. They had not been there many days when the plague broke out at Athens for the first time. A similar disorder is said to have previously smitten many places, particularly Lemnos,³ but there is no record of such a pestilence occurring elsewhere, or of so great a destruction of human life. For a while physicians, in ignorance of the nature of the disease, sought to apply remedies; but it was in vain, and they themselves were among the first victims, because they most often came into contact with it. No human art was of any avail, and as to supplications in temples, inquiries of oracles,⁴ and the like, they were utterly useless, and at last men were overpowered by the calamity and gave them all up.

The disease is said to have begun south of Egypt in Ethiopia; thence it descended⁵ into Egypt and Libya,⁶ and after spreading over the greater part of the Persian empire, suddenly fell upon Athens. It first attacked the inhabitants of the Piraeus,⁷ and it was supposed that the Peloponnesians had poisoned the cisterns, no conduits having as yet been made there. It afterwards reached the upper city, and then the mortality became far greater. As to its probable origin or the causes which might or could have produced such a disturbance of nature, every man, whether a physician or not, will give his own opinion. But I shall describe its actual course, and the symptoms by which any one who knows them beforehand may recognize the disorder should it ever reappear. For I was myself attacked and witnessed the sufferings of others.

The season was admitted to have been remarkably free from ordinary sickness and if anybody was already ill of any other disease, it was ab-

sorbed in this. Many who were in perfect health, all in a moment, and without any apparent reason, were seized with violent heats in the head and with redness and inflammation of the eyes. Internally the throat and the tongue were quickly suffused with blood, and the breath became unnatural and fetid. There followed sneezing and hoarseness; in a short time the disorder, accompanied by a violent cough, reached the chest; then fastening lower down, it would move the stomach and bring on all the vomits of bile to which physicians have ever given names; and they were very distressing. An ineffectual retching producing violent convulsions attacked most of the sufferers; some as soon as the previous symptoms had abated, others not until long afterwards. The body externally was not so very hot to the touch, nor yet pale; it was of a livid color inclining to red, and breaking out in pustules and ulcers. But the internal fever was intense; the sufferers could not bear to have on them even the finest linen garment; they insisted on being naked, and there was nothing which they longed for more eagerly than to throw themselves into cold water. And many of those who had no one to look after them actually plunged into the cisterns, for they were tormented by unceasing thirst, which was not in the least assuaged whether they drank little or much. They could not sleep; a restlessness which was intolerable never left them. While the disease was at its height the body, instead of wasting away, held out amid these sufferings in a marvelous manner, and either they died on the seventh or ninth day, not of weakness, for their strength was not exhausted, but of internal fever, which was the end of most; or, if they survived, then the disease descended into the bowels and there produced violent ulceration; severe diarrhoea at the same time set in, and at a later stage caused exhaustion, which finally with few

¹The Spartans and their allies. Sparta was located in the *Peloponnesus*, the southern peninsula of the Greek mainland.

²The peninsula on which Athens was located.

³An Aegean island.

⁴Priestesses of Apollo who looked into the future.

⁵The Nile flows northward; therefore, one descends the river while traveling from south to north.

⁶The region of North Africa immediately west of Egypt.

⁷Athens's port.

exceptions carried them off. For the disorder which had originally settled in the head passed gradually through the whole body, and, if a person got over the worst, would often seize the extremities and leave its mark, attacking the privy parts and the fingers and the toes, and some escaped with the loss of these, some with the loss of their eyes. Some again had no sooner recovered than they were seized with a forgetfulness of all things and knew neither themselves nor their friends.

The malady took a form not to be described, and the fury with which it fastened upon each sufferer was too much for human nature to endure. There was one circumstance in particular which distinguished it from ordinary diseases. The birds and animals which feed on human flesh, although so many bodies were lying unburied, either never came near them, or died if they touched them. This was proved by a remarkable disappearance of the birds of prey, who were not to be seen either about the bodies or anywhere else; while in the case of the dogs the fact was even more obvious, because they live with man.

Such was the general nature of the disease: I omit many strange peculiarities which characterized individual cases. None of the ordinary sicknesses attacked any one while it lasted, or, if they did, they ended in the plague. Some of the sufferers died from want of care, others equally who were receiving the greatest attention. No single remedy could be deemed a specific; for that which did good to one did harm to another. No constitution was of itself strong enough to resist or weak enough to escape the attacks; the disease carried off all alike and defied every mode of treatment. Most appalling was the despondency which seized upon any one who felt himself sickening, for he instantly abandoned his mind to despair and, instead of holding out, absolutely threw away his chance of life. Appalling too was the rapidity with which men caught the infection; dying like sheep if they attended on one another; and this was the principal cause of mortality. When they were afraid to visit one

another, the sufferers died in their solitude, so that many houses were empty because there had been no one left to take care of the sick; or if they ventured they perished, especially those who aspired to heroism. For they went to see their friends without thought of themselves and were ashamed to leave them, even at a time when the very relations of the dying were at last growing weary and ceased to make lamentations, overwhelmed by the vastness of the calamity. But whatever instances there may have been of such devotion, more often the sick and the dying were tended by the pitying care of those who had recovered, because they knew the course of the disease and were themselves free from apprehension. For no one was ever attacked a second time, or not with a fatal result. All men congratulated them, and they themselves, in the excess of their joy at the moment, had an innocent fancy that they could not die of any other sickness.

The crowding of the people out of the country into the city aggravated the misery; and the newly-arrived suffered most. For, having no houses of their own, but inhabiting in the height of summer stifling huts, the mortality among them was dreadful, and they perished in wild disorder. The dead lay as they had died, one upon another, while others hardly alive wallowed in the streets and crawled about every fountain craving for water. The temples in which they lodged were full of the corpses of those who died in them; for the violence of the calamity was such that men, not knowing where to turn, grew reckless of all law, human and divine. The customs which had hitherto been observed at funerals were universally violated, and they buried their dead each one as best he could. Many, having no proper appliances, because the deaths in their household had been so frequent, made no scruple of using the burial-place of others. When one man had raised a funeral pile, others would come, and throwing on their dead first, set fire to it; or when some other corpse was already burning, before they could be stopped would throw their own dead upon it and depart.

There were other and worse forms of lawlessness which the plague introduced at Athens. Men who had hitherto concealed their indulgence in pleasure now grew bolder. For, seeing the sudden change, — how the rich died in a moment, and those who had nothing immediately inherited their property, — they reflected that life and riches were alike transitory, and they resolved to enjoy themselves while they could, and to think only of pleasure. Who would be willing to sacrifice himself to the law of honor when he knew not whether he would ever live to be held in

honor? The pleasure of the moment and any sort of thing which conduced to it took the place both of honor and of expediency. No fear of god or law of man deterred a criminal. Those who saw all perishing alike, thought that the worship or neglect of the gods made no difference. For offences against human law no punishment was to be feared; no one would live long enough to be called to account. Already a far heavier sentence had been passed and was hanging over a man's head; before that fell, why should he not take a little pleasure?

An Alienated Woman



29 ▼ *Euripides, MEDEA*

Pericles concluded that Athens had become “the school of Hellas” because of the freedom its citizens enjoyed. As citizens with a vested interest in the polis, its people could develop independence and self-reliance easily and in many different directions. There is likely much truth to Pericles’ vision, and undoubtedly this freedom contributed substantially to Athens’s vitality as Hellas’s chief intellectual and artistic center during the fifth century B.C.E. Yet we must remember that in Pericles’ day the benefits of citizenship were restricted to a minority of the population — free, native-born, male adults. Moreover, a number of Hellenic rationalists and artists, including some Athenians, found the atmosphere of city-states that were dictatorships and oligarchies more attractive than the often tumultuous democracy of Athens. One notable expatriate from Athens was the playwright *Euripides* (ca. 480–406 B.C.E.).

While Hippocrates studied the clinical course of physical diseases, Euripides specialized in diagnosing emotional disorders and mental breakdowns, especially those brought on by social ills. Deep compassion underlay his dissections of tortured human psyches in the tragedies that he authored. Although he sought more to understand than to judge, his extant plays show him to have been an outspoken critic of the indignities suffered by those whom Athenian society exploited or overlooked: war victims, slaves, foreigners, and especially women.

Athenian women lived in a society that accorded them little status and less freedom. They dominate, however, most of Euripides’ extant plays. His heroines differ in character and situation, but all share several qualities. Each is memorable and a powerful personality in her own right. Each also, in differing degrees, is a social victim and consequently displays the aberrant behavior of a person denied the full range of human expression.

Euripides possessed more than just a voice of indignation and a deep social conscience. He was able, through his art, to analyze rationally and coolly the terrible

personal and social consequences of exploitation in works that his fellow citizens found fascinating but disturbing. His plays were always well attended, yet the playwright's more than ninety works, composed over a career of some fifty years, won a total of only five first prizes, and one of those was posthumous. Late in life the aged artist-psychologist was forced to leave Athens, probably because of his outspoken opposition to Athenian atrocities in the Peloponnesian War. Eventually he took up residence in the wilds of far-off Macedon.

A quarter of a century earlier, on the eve of the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War, Euripides produced *Medea*, ironically a play revolving around a mythical exile. The story tells how Medea, a barbarian woman from the region of the Black Sea, had fallen in love with the adventurer Jason and resolved to assist him in his quest for the Golden Fleece, no matter the price. The price was high. She killed her brother and betrayed her father. Eventually she and Jason and now their two children arrive as refugees at Corinth, which is where the play's action takes place. Here Jason abandons Medea and becomes engaged to King Creon's daughter. Creon, perceiving Medea and her children as a threat and embarrassment, orders Medea and the children to leave Corinth.

Love and hate, emotions so clearly allied, soon become one and the same in Medea. Eventually she kills Creon, his daughter, and her two children and magically escapes. Here, in the opening scene, Euripides establishes the theme and provides clear hints of the horrors to come.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. Assuming that Euripides' play was a commentary on contemporary Athenian social issues, what does the evidence suggest about the status of women and minors, and resident aliens in Athens?
2. What does Medea's speech suggest about the status of foreigners and other noncitizens in Pericles' Athens?
3. How might Medea respond to Pericles' Funeral Oration?

*The scene is Corinth, in front of
Medea's house.*

*Enter aged Nurse, who accompanied Medea
from Colchis and now serves as nurse of
Medea's children*

NURSE.

How I wish that the ship Argo¹ had never flown
between the blue Clashing Rocks to Colchis,²

that the pine had never been cut down to make
oars for the hands of those princes who sought
the Golden Fleece for Pelias!³ For then my mis-
tress would never have fallen in love with Jason
and sailed with him to the towers of Iolchus,⁴
she would never have persuaded the daughters
of Pelias to kill their father;⁵ she would never
have come to live in this land of Corinth⁶ with
her husband and children.

¹The ship that Jason captained in his search for the Golden Fleece.

²Medea's homeland along the eastern shores of the Black Sea.

³Jason's uncle, who sent Jason to Colchis to secure the Golden Fleece.

To be sure, the people here were pleased when she came. She helped Jason in every way. They never had arguments, and it's a happy home when husband and wife agree. But now love has sickened, and everything is hatred between them. Jason has betrayed his children and my mistress. He is taking to his bed the royal princess, and wretched Medea, outraged, cries aloud the promises he gave her, their right hands clasped in loyalty to each other, the greatest pledge there is, and summons the gods to witness how Jason repays all she did for him. She lies without food, her body smitten with grief, wasting away all the time in tears, brooding over the wrong done her by her husband. She doesn't lift her face from the floor, she's like a rock or a wave of the sea, deaf to her friends' advice, turning away from them as she moans for her father, her native land, and the home she deserted to follow a man who has now dishonored her.

Yes, poor woman, she has learned from disaster what it is to lose one's country. She even hates her children, they give her no joy when she looks at them. I'm afraid she has something terrible in mind, for in her sullen fury she won't put up with being insulted. I know her! What will she do? Will she go silently into a bedroom and drive a dagger through someone's heart? Or will she kill the King and the bridegroom and then pay for it with even greater suffering? A terrible woman she is, and no one will easily harm her and sing a song of triumph.

But here come the children, through with their morning sport. How little they know of their mother's troubles, for the mind of the young does not take to grief.

Enter Children and Attendant.

MEDEA (*within the house*).
O God!

Wretched am I and full of woe,
How I wish I were dead!

NURSE.

Do you hear that, dearest children?
Your mother's
Heart is racked, her fury full.
Hasten quickly inside the house,
And don't approach within her sight,
Don't go near her, but guard against
The savage nature and raging hate
Of her self-willed heart.

Come now, go in as fast as you can.
For a cloud has arisen above the earth,
A cloud which will quickly burst into
flame

With rising fury. What will she do,
That heart, proud and hard to control,
That spirit stung by injustice?

MEDEA (*within*).

How I have suffered, suffered things
Full of agony! O cursed children
Of a hated mother, I wish you were dead!
May your father and our home perish!

NURSE.

O God, O God, you pitiful woman!
What part have the children in their father's
sin?

Why do you hate them? O my dears,
How I fear lest you will suffer!
For terrible are the moods of princes,
Ruled in few things, controlling many,
They find it hard to govern their wrath.
To learn to live as an equal with equals
Is better. In modest and quiet ways
May I come to life's end securely.
Best is the middle road. To use it
Is good for mortals, but any excess
Brings no advantage whatever to people.
Greater ruin, when he becomes outraged,
A god brings on prosperous homes.

⁴Jason's homeland in Thessaly, in northern Greece.

⁵Medea was a witch and dispatched the evil Pelias by duping his daughters through her magical arts.

⁶Because of Pelias's death, Jason, Medea and their children sought refuge in Corinth, which is in the Peloponnesus.

As she finishes speaking, the Chorus of women of Corinth, with their Leader, enter.

LEADER.

I heard the voice, I heard the cry
Of the wretched
Woman of Colchis, savage still.
Tell me, old woman, why is she wailing
Within her home? I am unhappy
At the pain she suffers, for this home
I have come to regard with devotion.

NURSE.

It's a home no more, all that is gone.
He has a bed in the royal palace,
She wastes her life away in her room.
My mistress allows herself no comfort
In words that her friends would offer.

MEDEA (*within*).

O God,
Through my brain let a lightning bolt from
heaven
Smite. What's the gain of living longer?
If only death would give me release
And I could leave hated life behind!

CHORUS.

Do you hear, Zeus,⁷ Earth, and Light,
What a cry the unfortunate wife
Utters of woe?
Why, wretched one, long for the last
Bed on which all of us once must lie?
Death will hasten all too soon,
Do not beg for it.
If your husband
Rejoices in a new marriage
That is common. Do not be agonized,
Zeus will befriend you. Do not so bitterly
Waste away grieving over your husband.

MEDEA (*within*).

O great Themis⁸ and Lady Artemis,⁹
You see what I suffer, after I bound

That cursed husband to me with great oaths.
Now may I see him and his bride
Crumble to dust in their new home,
They who dared wrong me without cause.
O father, O city, which I fled from
After I shamelessly slew my brother!

NURSE.

Do you hear what she says, and how she calls
On Themis and Zeus with her entreaties,
Zeus the trusted steward of promises?
Certainly no mild revenge
Will satisfy my lady's anger.

CHORUS.

If only she would let us see her,
Let us soothe her with comforting words,
Then she might lessen her fierce rage
And her frenzy of spirit.
I would never be alien to my friends.
So go to her,
Bring her forth from the house,
Tell her friends are here.
Hurry before she harms those within,
For great grief journeys fast.

NURSE.

I will do it, but I am afraid
I can never persuade my mistress.
Yet I will do this labor of love.
Like a lioness with her brood
She glares at us servants, whenever one
Approaches her with soothing words. . . .

Exit Nurse into the house.

CHORUS.

I heard the cry weighted with woe
Of the woman grieving over betrayal
By the husband who forsook her bed,
And she calls on the gods to avenge the
injustice,
On Themis, keeper of oaths for Zeus,
Who led her to Hellas over the sea

⁷Chief of the gods.

⁸The handmaiden of the gods who presides over justice and order and serves as Zeus's counselor. She was the protector of the oppressed and goddess of the rights of hospitality.

⁹Daughter of Zeus and Apollo's twin, she punished the wicked and impious with her arrows.

The sea to the north, through the endless gate
Of the Hellespont.¹⁰

Medea enters.

MEDEA.

Women of Corinth, I have come out of the house so that you will not blame me for keeping to myself. For I know that many people are too reserved toward others; they stay at home too much or are not friendly in company, and some by sheer laziness get the reputation of not caring for their neighbors. But it isn't fair to judge and dislike at first sight people who have done no wrong, without understanding them. A foreigner must be especially careful to conform to the customs of the city, but even a Greek who lives entirely to himself is criticized for it and becomes unpopular, because people do not know him.

As for me, you must be tolerant, because a totally unexpected blow has fallen on me and ruined my life. I go about with all joy in life gone, friends, wishing only to die. The man in whom all my happiness rested has turned out to be the basest of all men — my husband.

Of all things that live upon the earth and have intelligence we women are certainly the most wretched. First we must get a great amount of money to buy a husband, and then it's a master of our bodies that we take. Not to succeed in getting one brings even greater unhappiness. Then comes the greatest gamble of all — will

he be kind or cruel to us? You know how hard it is for women to get a divorce, and it's impossible to reject a husband. So then, entering among new ways of life and customs, a bride must be a seer — she never learned those things at home — to get on well with this man who sleeps beside her. If by working our hardest we bring it about that our husbands stay with us without fretting, life is enviable, but if we fail we were better dead. When a man finds life unbearable at home he goes out to visit some friend, or to his club, and gets relief, but we have no one to look to but him. Then they say we lead a sheltered life at home, avoiding danger, while they go out to fight, but I say that's absurd. I'd sooner go three times into battle than bear one child.

But beyond these things we share in common, my situation is different from yours. You have this city and your father's homes, security, and the company of your friends. I am alone, without a city, and now I am outraged by the man who dragged me from a foreign country. I have no mother, no brother, no kin to take refuge with from this disaster.

There is only one thing I shall ask of you. If I find some way of repaying my husband for the way he has treated me, keep quiet about it. For you know that a woman is timid in other things, and is a coward in looking on cold steel, but whenever she is wronged in her marriage there is no heart so murderous as hers.

¹⁰The narrow strait separating Europe from Asia, it connects the Aegean with the Sea of Marmara. Its modern name is the Dardanelles.

Socrates and the Laws of Athens



30 ▼ *Plato, CRITO*

In his Funeral Oration, Pericles claims that Athenians respect authority and the laws. The question is, how far does civic obedience extend when legal authorities have apparently perverted or misapplied the law? The question was more than academic for the philosopher and social critic *Socrates* of Athens (ca. 469–399

B.C.E.). Socrates' uncompromising search for truth and goodness of soul led him to expose humbuggery and hypocrisy wherever he found them, and he earned the enmity of many who had been stung by his and his students' ability to tie into logical knots people who were guilty of fuzzy thinking or moral obtuseness. For most of his seventy years, Athens tolerated this self-proclaimed gadfly, but in the mood of bitter recrimination that followed Athens's defeat in the Peloponnesian War — a defeat that had been precipitated by the ill-considered policies of one of Socrates' former students — the philosopher found himself defending not only his teachings but his very life. In 399 a young conservative politician charged the old man with introducing strange gods and corruption of Athens's youth. Found guilty in a public trial, Socrates chose the sentence of death rather than exile.

Much of what we know, or think we know, about Socrates comes from the *Dialogues* of Plato (427–348 B.C.E.), one of Socrates' students and arguably the most original philosopher produced by classical Hellas. The *Dialogues* consist of a series of conversations that Socrates allegedly had with a number of contemporaries regarding ethical, social, and political issues. How much of what we read in them is truly Socratic and how much is Platonic remains a subject of vigorous debate among scholars.

The dialogue from which the present source is excerpted is known as the *Crito*. The setting is prison, where Socrates awaits imminent execution. Crito, his friend of many years, visits and informs the philosopher that escape is possible. A number of people stand ready to bribe some willing officials to let Socrates slip away into exile. Socrates refuses and in doing so delivers what is known as “The Speech of the Laws of Athens,” in which he addresses the obligations of citizenship.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. What are the Laws' essential arguments, and why does Socrates find them compelling?
2. Socrates speaks of following the divine will, but are his arguments regarding right and wrong based on a god-centered religious vision or on something else? What conclusions follow from your answer?
3. Compare Socrates' view of citizenship and its rights and responsibilities with those of Pericles. Do they agree? Based on your study of both sources, what inferences have you reached regarding citizenship in Athens?
4. What would a Chinese Legalist, such as we saw in source 25, think of this speech?

SOCRATES: In leaving the prison against the will of the Athenians, do I wrong any? or rather do I not wrong those whom I ought least to wrong? Do I not desert the principles which were acknowledged by us to be just — what do you say?

CRITO: I cannot tell Socrates; for I do not know.

SOCRATES: Then consider the matter in this way: — Imagine that I am about to play truant (you may call the proceeding by any name which you like), and the laws and the government come and interrogate me: “Tell us Socrates,” they say, “what are you about? Are you not going by an

act of yours to overturn us — the laws, and the whole state, as far as in you lies? Do you imagine that a state can subsist and not be overthrown, in which the decisions of law have no power, but are set aside and trampled upon by individuals?" What will be our answer, Crito, to these and the like words? Any one, and especially a rhetorician, will have a good deal to say on behalf of the law which requires a sentence to be carried out. He will argue that this law should not be set aside; and shall we reply, "Yes, but the state has injured us and gives an unjust sentence." Suppose I say that?

CRITO: Very good, Socrates.

SOCRATES: "And was that our agreement with you?" the law would answer, "or were you to abide by the sentence of the state?" And if I were to express my astonishment at their words, the law would probably add: "Answer, Socrates, instead of opening your eyes — you are in the habit of asking and answering questions. Tell us, — What complaint have you to make against us which justifies you in attempting to destroy us and the state? In the first place did we not bring you into existence? Your father married your mother by our aid and begat you. Say whether you have any objection to urge against those of us who regulate marriage?" None, I should reply. "Or against those of us who after birth regulate the nurture and education of children, in which you also were trained? Were not the laws which have the charge of education, right in commanding your father to train you in music and gymnastic?" Right, I should reply. "Well then, since you were brought into the world and nurtured and educated by us, can you deny in the first place that you are our child and slave, as your fathers were before you? And if this is true you are not on equal terms with us; nor can you think that you have a right to do to us what we are doing to you. Would you have any right to strike or revile or do any other evil to your father or your master, if you had one, because you have been struck or reviled by him, or received some other evil at his hands? — you would not say this? And because we think right to destroy you,

do you think that you have any right to destroy us in return, and your country as far as in you lies? Will you, O professor of true virtue, pretend that you are justified in this? Has a philosopher like you failed to discover that our country is more to be valued and higher and holier far than mother or father or any ancestor, and more to be regarded in the eyes of the gods and of men of understanding? also to be soothed, and gently and reverently entreated when angry, even more than a father, and either to be persuaded, or if not persuaded, to be obeyed? And when we are punished by her, whether with imprisonment or stripes, the punishment is to be endured in silence; and if she lead us to wounds or death in battle, thither we follow as is right; neither may any one yield or retreat or leave his rank, but whether in battle or in a court of law, or in any other place, he must do what his city and his country order him; or he must change their view of what is just: and if he may do no violence to his father or mother, much less may he do violence to his country." What answer shall we make to this, Crito? Do the laws speak truly, or do they not?

CRITO: I think they do.

SOCRATES: Then the laws will say: "Consider, Socrates, if we are speaking truly that in your present attempt you are going to do us an injury. For, having brought you into the world, and nurtured and educated you, and given you and every other citizen a share in every good which we had to give, we further proclaim to any Athenian by the liberty that we allow him, that if he does not like us when he has become of age and has seen the ways of the city, and made our acquaintance, he may go where he pleases and take his goods with him. None of us laws will forbid him or interfere with him. Any one who does not like us and the city, and who wants to emigrate to a colony or to any other city, may go where he likes, retaining his property. But he who has experience of the manner in which we order justice and administer the state, and still remains, has entered into an implied contract that he will do as we command him. And he who

disobeys us is, as we maintain, thrice wrong; first, because in disobeying us he is disobeying his parents; secondly, because we are the authors of his education; thirdly, because he has made an agreement with us that he will duly obey our commands; and he neither obeys them nor convinces us that our commands are unjust; and we do not rudely impose them, but give him the alternative of obeying or convincing us; — that is what we offer, and he does neither.

"These are the sort of accusations to which as we were saying, you, Socrates, will be exposed if you accomplish your intentions; you, above all other Athenians." Suppose now I ask, why I rather than anybody else? They will justly retort upon me that I above all other men have acknowledged the agreement. "There is clear proof," they will say, "Socrates, that we and the city were not displeasing to you. Of all Athenians you have been the most constant resident in the city, which, as you never leave, you may be supposed to love. For you never went out of the city either to see the games,¹ except once when you went to Isthmus,² or to any other place unless when you were on military service; nor did you travel as other men do. Nor had you any curiosity to know other states or their laws. Your affections did not go beyond us and our state; we were your special favorites, and you acquiesced in our government of you; and here in this city you begat your children, which is proof of your satisfaction. Moreover, you might in the course of the trial, if you had liked, have fixed the penalty at banishment; the state which refuses to let you go now would have let you go then. But you pretended that you preferred death to exile and that you were not unwilling to die. And now you have forgotten these fine sentiments, and pay no respect to us the laws, of whom you are the destroyer; and are doing what only a miserable slave would do, running away and turning your back upon the compacts and agreements which you made as a

citizen. And first of all answer this very question: Are we right in saying that you agreed to be governed according to us in deed, and not in word only? Is that true or not?" How shall we answer, Crito? Must we not assent?

CRITO: We cannot help it, Socrates.

SOCRATES: Then will they not say: "You, Socrates, are breaking the covenants and agreements which you made with us at your leisure, not in any haste or under any compulsion or deception, but after you have had seventy years to think of them, during which time you were at liberty to leave the city, if we were not to your mind, or if our covenants appeared to you to be unfair. You had your choice, and might have gone either to Lacedaemon³ or Crete, both which states are often praised by you for their good government, or to some other Hellenic or foreign state. Whereas you, above all other Athenians, seemed to be so fond of the state, or, in other words, of us her laws (and who would care about a state which has no laws?), that you never stirred out of her; the halt, the blind, the maimed were not more stationary in her than you were. And now you run away and forsake your agreements. Not so, Socrates, if you will take our advice; do not make yourself ridiculous by escaping out of the city.

"For just consider, if you transgress and err in this sort of way, what good will you do either to yourself or to your friends? That your friends will be driven into exile and deprived of citizenship, or will lose their property, is tolerably certain; and you yourself, if you fly to one of the neighboring cities, as, for example, Thebes or Megara, both of which are well governed, will come to them as an enemy, Socrates, and their government will be against you, and all patriotic citizens will cast an evil eye upon you as a subverter of the laws, and you will confirm in the minds of the judges the justice of their own condemnation of you. For he who is a corrupter of the laws

¹Various religious festivals at which athletic games were held. The most famous were the pan-Hellenic Olympic Games.

²The Isthmian Games in honor of Poseidon and held by the

city of Corinth, which commanded the isthmus that connects central Greece with the Peloponnesian Peninsula.

³Sparta.

is more than likely to be a corrupter of the young and foolish portion of mankind. Will you then flee from well-ordered cities and virtuous men? And is existence worth having on these terms? Or will you go to them without shame, and talk to them, Socrates? And what will you say to them? What you say here about virtue and justice and institutions and laws being the best things among men? Would that be decent of you? Surely not. But if you go away from well-governed states to Crito's friends in Thessaly,⁴ where there is great disorder and license, they will be charmed to hear the tale of your escape from prison, set off with ludicrous particulars of the manner in which you were wrapped in a goatskin or some other disguise, and metamorphosed as the manner is of runaways; but will there be no one to remind you that in your old age you were not ashamed to violate the most sacred laws from a miserable desire of a little more life? Perhaps not, if you keep them in good temper; but if they are out of temper you will hear many degrading things; you will live, but how? — as the flatterer of all men, and the servant of all men; and doing what? — eating and drinking in Thessaly, having gone abroad in order that you may get a dinner. And where will be your fine sentiments about justice and virtue? Say that you wish to live for the sake of your children — you want to bring them up and educate them — will you take them into Thessaly and deprive them of Athenian citizenship? Is this the benefit which you will confer upon them? Or are you under the impression that they will be better cared for and educated here if you are still alive, although absent from them; for your friends will

take care of them? Do you fancy that if you are an inhabitant of Thessaly they will take care of them, and if you are an inhabitant of the other world that they will not take care of them? Nay; but if they who call themselves friends are good for anything, they will — to be sure they will.

"Listen then, Socrates, to us who have brought you up. Think not of life and children first, and of justice afterwards, but of justice first, that you may be justified before the princes of the world below. For neither will you nor any that belong to you be happier or holier or juster in this life, or happier in another, if you do as Crito bids. Now you depart in innocence, a sufferer and not a doer of evil; a victim, not of the laws but of men. But if you go forth, returning evil for evil, and injury for injury, breaking the covenants and agreements which you have made with us, and wronging those whom you ought least of all to wrong, that is to say, yourself, your friends, your country, and us, we shall be angry with you while you live, and our brethren, the laws in the world below, will receive you as an enemy; for they will know that you have done your best to destroy us. Listen, then, to us and not to Crito."

This, dear Crito, is the voice which I seem to hear murmuring in my ears, like the sound of the flute in the ears of the mystic; that voice, I say, is humming in my ears, and prevents me from hearing any other. And I know that anything more which you may say will be vain. Yet speak, if you have anything to say.

CRITO: I have nothing to say, Socrates.

SOCRATES: Leave me then, Crito, to fulfill the divine will, and to follow whither it leads.

⁴A wild area of northern Greece. In 408 B.C.E. the playwright Euripides left Athens for Thessaly, apparently dis-

appointed at his lack of popular acclaim in his native city. From there he went to equally remote Macedon.

Art and the Human Form



31 ▼ *THREE HELLENIC WORKS OF ART*

It is often said that for the ancient Hellenes, the human was the measure of all things. Its gods were humanlike in appearance and in their passions, and human concerns, especially morality and politics, consumed Greek thinkers and writers. Humanity, especially the human form, was also the consuming interest of fifth-century B.C.E. Hellenic sculptural and graphic artists, as the following three pieces of art illustrate.

Our first masterpiece is a silver coin from the Greek city of Syracuse in Sicily. Dated to around 479 B.C.E., it depicts a woman wearing a wreath of olive leaves, who represents simultaneously the goddess Artemis (see source 29, note 9), the protectress of Syracuse, and the water nymph Arethusa. The goddess/nymph is surrounded by four dolphins and a ring of Greek letters that spell out SYRAKOSION, identifying the coin as being “of the Syracusans.” According to legend, in order to protect the nymph from unwanted sexual advances, the goddess Artemis had transformed Arethusa into the fresh-water spring that bubbles up at the edge of Syracuse’s harbor. A further tradition holds that this magnificent coin was minted in honor of *Demarete*, wife of Syracuse’s tyrant, or leader, in order to commemorate a great naval victory over the Carthaginians in 480 and her successful intervention to secure favorable terms for the vanquished foe. For this reason, the coin, of which only twelve are known to exist today, is known as a *Demareteion*. Tradition further has it that Arethusa/Artemis bears Demareta’s likeness.

Our second piece of art is a *rybton*, or drinking horn, crafted around 440 B.C.E. by the Athenian potter Sotades. Found at Meroë in southern Nubia, it testifies to the wide-ranging popularity of Greek art. Represented here is an *Amazon* warrior on horseback, and on the conical cup that is attached to her back is a painted (red on black) scene of a Greek man fighting an Amazon woman. The crescent shield and mailed leggings of the female warrior on the right-hand side of the painting, as well as the trousers of the horsewoman, are meant to convey the foreign origin of these barbarians. Originally the horse and rider were brightly painted in a variety of colors, and traces of the paint can still be seen. The terracotta rider also probably held at one time a hunting spear in her clenched right hand.

Our third work is one of the six standing-maiden columns on the south porch of the *Erechtheum* on Athens’s *Acropolis* (high city). The temple was constructed in honor of the legendary king of Athens, Erechtheus, in the period 421–405 B.C.E., during the Peloponnesian War. To fifth-century Athenians, the columns were simply known affectionately as “The Maidens,” but later ages came to know them as the *Caryatids*, a term for any architectural support in the form of a woman. Note how the sculptor has used the maiden’s draped robe to give form to her figure.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. "The art of fifth-century classical Hellas expressed the importance of the human person." Based on these three examples, do you agree or disagree? Be specific in articulating your reasons.
2. It has also been said that Hellenic artists created idealized human forms that conveyed a sense of serene balance without losing reality. Based on these three examples, do you agree or disagree? Be specific in articulating your reasons.
3. "Simplicity, dignity, and restraint were the hallmarks of Hellenic art, and all three qualities reflected the Greek vision of a world that was understandable and controllable." Based on these three examples, do you agree or disagree? Be specific in articulating your reasons.



A Demareteion



The Amazon Rhyton by Sotades



A Maiden of the Erechtheum

Chapter 5

Regional Empires and Afro-Eurasian Interchange

300 B.C.E.—500 C.E.

By 300 B.C.E. the cultural traditions of China, India, Southwest Asia, and Hellas were solidly in place and ready to expand beyond their original boundaries. Expand they did, but expansion followed no single pattern. Imperial aggrandizement, largely by means of military conquest, played a major role in spreading Chinese, Southwest Asian, and Hellenic cultural influences, but it was not a factor in the creation in Southeast Asia of a *Greater India* (as many historians term it).

As early as the first century C.E., people of the coastal areas of Southeast Asia accepted elements of Indian culture, including Hindu and Buddhist religious traditions, from merchants traveling across the Bay of Bengal. Colonists, including Indian priests and scholars, soon followed the merchants. Traffic, however, was not all one-way, as youths from various emerging Hindu and Buddhist kingdoms throughout Southeast Asia traveled to India for advanced religious instruction. Although the Hindu caste system failed to take root in Southeast Asia, other Indian traditions flourished there, including the Hindu cults of Shiva and Vishnu (Chapter 6, sources 42 and 43) and the notion of the *devaraja* (sacred king) — an idea embraced by native ruling elites.

Chinese cultural influences traveled south, northeast, and west as a consequence of both military adventure — the imperialistic expansionism of the Qin and *Han* dynasties — and more peaceful exchanges, especially the travels of merchants and the slow, steady southward migration of China's expanding peasant population. The armies of Han conquered

Manchuria and northern Korea and established hegemony over non-Chinese peoples to the south in northern Vietnam and along the Himalayan foothills. To the west, the armies of Han China penetrated deeply into Central Asia. Wherever its soldiers went, its merchants were not too far behind. The roads that China opened to the West also served as conduits for the influx of new ideas into the Middle Kingdom, particularly Mahayana Buddhism (Chapter 6, sources 44 and 45), which flowed into China along its overland trade routes.

From the late sixth to the late fourth century B.C.E., the *Persian Empire*, centered in Southwest Asia, encompassed an area from the Nile to the Indus, from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf, from the Black Sea to the Red Sea. Although the Persians were respectful of local traditions, their massive empire was a fertile medium for the blending and transmission of many different cultures. Then, in the late fourth century, Persia and Greece were merged into a single empire for one brief but significant moment. The conquest of the Persian Empire by *Alexander the Great* (r. 336–323 B.C.E.) and his penetration as far east as Central Asia and the Indus Valley ushered in a new era for western Eurasia — the *Hellenistic Age*. Whereas the Hellenic World had been parochial, the Hellenistic World was cosmopolitan and culturally eclectic. The armies of Alexander and the state-builders who followed helped create a cultural amalgamation of Southwest Asian, Egyptian, and even some Indian elements, over which was laid a layer of Greek language, thought, and artistic expression. What emerged was, to use a Greek word, a cultural *ecumene* (a unity of diverse civilized peoples). This world culture stretched from western Central Asia and northwest India in the East to the regions of the central Mediterranean in the West, and much of it was Greek in form and inspiration.

Alexander's empire did not survive him, but the amalgamation of peoples and cultures that he forged laid the basis for Hellenistic successor states in Egypt, Southwest Asia, and the Mediterranean. Of these, the most impressive was the *Roman Empire*. To be sure, Romans spoke Latin and not Greek, and their civilization was as deeply influenced by the Etruscans of north-central Italy as it was by Greeks and other Hellenistic cultures. Moreover, their empire was centered on the Mediterranean Sea — far away from the heartland of the original Hellenistic Ecumene. Notwithstanding all of these realities, it is still reasonable to see the Roman Empire as the last and greatest of the Hellenistic states and as the carrier of Hellenistic culture into such faraway western regions as Gaul, Germany, and Britain.

Rome was certainly not Eurasia's only great empire. By the end of the first century B.C.E. four great regional empires linked China, India, Southwest Asia, and the Greco-Roman Mediterranean in a chain of civilization from the Pacific to the Atlantic. Han China dominated East Asia and reached deeply into Central Asia. India, which was not politically united, was joined to Central Asia by the *Kushana Empire* in its northern regions. The *Parthian Empire*, which had arisen in the wake of the collapse of the most eastern Hellenistic state, controlled the Southwest Asian lands of Iran and Mesopotamia and aggressively butted up against the Roman Empire. Land and sea routes, most notably the fabled *Silk Road*, now joined these civilized regions, creating the first age of Afro-Eurasian linkage.

Although most of the major trade routes traversed the lands and waters of Eurasia, Africa also shared in this unification to the extent that North Africa was an integral part of the Roman Empire, and northern portions of Africa's eastern coast were linked by regular trade with Arabia, India, and Southeast Asia.

This age of grand-scale linkage began to break down around 200 C.E., when both China and the Roman Empire entered periods of severe crisis. Despite political and economic disasters, however, trade along the Silk Road never totally ceased in the centuries that followed, even though it experienced periods of severe recession.

The Greco-Roman World

Alexander the Great died in Babylon in 323 B.C.E. Tradition claims that when questioned as to whom he bequeathed his empire, he replied, "the best man." No single, would-be successor proved strong enough to seize the entire empire. Rather, rival generals divided the Hellenistic World into a number of successor states. The two mightiest and most brilliant were the kingdom of the *Seleucids*, centered on Anatolia, Mesopotamia, and Syria, and the kingdom of Egypt, which fell to the family of *Ptolemy*, one of Alexander's Macedonian generals.

Ptolemy and his successors lavished money on their capital, *Alexandria*, transforming this new city, located in Egypt's northern delta region, into the most impressive cosmopolitan setting in the Hellenistic World. The city's twin crowning glories, at least in the opinion of scholars and scientists, were the Museum, which functioned as a center of advanced research, and the Library, which represented an attempt to gather under one roof the entire Hellenistic World's store of written knowledge and contained perhaps as many as a half-million separate scrolls.

Both institutions enjoyed the continuous generous patronage of the Macedonian god-kings of Egypt and served as focal points for scientific and literary studies that were Greek in form and substance but cosmopolitan in scope and clientele. Educated Persians, Jews, Mesopotamians, Syrians, Italians, and members of many other ethnic groups flocked to Alexandria, where they formed an ecumenical community of scholars and artists whose common tongue and intellectual perspective were as Greek as that of their Ptolemaic hosts.

In 30 B.C.E. Cleopatra VII, the last Ptolemaic ruler of Egypt, died in Alexandria by her own hand, and Egypt passed under the direct control of the rising imperial power of Rome. By this time Rome had already seized control of Italy, Greece, major portions of Anatolia (which it termed *Asia Minor*), Syria, most of North Africa, all of the major Mediterranean islands, Spain, and the area north of the Alps and Pyrenees known as *Gaul*. The Mediterranean had truly become Rome's *Mare Nostrum* (Our Sea), and the Roman Empire now controlled a large portion of the Hellenistic World. As inheritor by conquest of eastern Mediterranean lands and culture, Rome would disseminate a Greco-Roman form of Hellenistic culture throughout the western Mediterranean, as well as among various barbarian peoples living in European lands well beyond the Mediterranean coastline. Well before the end of the first century C.E., Roman legions would be erecting Greek-style temples to the Persian god Mithras along the Rhine and in Britain, and Greek literature would be studied in schools throughout lands recently wrested from Gallic tribes.

Images of the Hellenistic World



32 ▼ FOUR HELLENISTIC SCULPTURES

The Hellenistic Ecumene was exceedingly cosmopolitan, but cosmopolitanism often carries a price. Parochial societies — such as fifth-century Hellas, which centered on small, fairly homogenous poleis — offer their inhabitants the security that comes from living in a friendly and understandable environment. Conversely, societies open to the world and filled with a bewildering array of different and often contradictory cultural stimuli can be frightening and alienating. Such alienation and confusion can have profound effects on artistic expression. But even when people are comfortable with cultural differences and at home in a *universal city* (which is the literal meaning of *cosmopolitan*) they tend to view the world and themselves differently from people whose horizons are more limited. This comfort with a wider world also finds expression in the arts.

As we saw in Chapter 4, source 31, Hellenic sculptors of the fifth century B.C.E. idealized the human body and placed the human being securely in the center of an ordered world — a world that they saw reflected in the poleis in which they were citizens. As the following four pieces suggest, later Hellenistic sculptors had different visions.

Our first item is a marble bust of King Euthydemos I of *Bactria* (r. ca. 235–200 B.C.E.), which dates from around 200 B.C.E. The Greek-speaking kings of Bactria

had carved out a realm on the far horizon of the Hellenistic World, a wild mountainous region in western Central Asia shared by the modern nations of Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Afghanistan. A native of Anatolia, Euthydemos had risen to power by overthrowing his predecessor. Our second piece is a Roman marble copy of a bronze original that had been created around 230–220 B.C.E. Known as *The Gaul and Wife*, the original had served as one of a number of statues gracing a victory monument of King Attalos I of *Pergamon* (r. 241–197 B.C.E.) that celebrated his victories over invading Gallic, or Celtic, tribes. The kings of Pergamon, a city located near the northwestern coast of Anatolia, lavished money on their city's beautification, using art to trumpet their policies and achievements. Our third sculpture is *The Old Woman*, also known as *The Old Market Woman*, an original work in marble that dates from the late second or early first century B.C.E. One interpretation of the sculpture is that the woman is depicted in the act of calling out to potential customers, hoping that they purchase the chicken and basket of vegetables and fruits that she holds in her left hand. Another interpretation, which we favor, is that the laurel wreath on her head suggests she is offering the goods as part of a religious festival, possibly one in honor of Dionysus, the god of wine. Our fourth sculpture is a bronze boxer by the Athenian sculptor Apollonius. Created around 60 B.C.E. in Italy, possibly for some rich fan of the Greek sport of pugilism, the work shows us a veteran boxer, whose broken nose, battered face and ears, muscular body, and leather gloves with bands of lead at the knuckles clearly indicate his profession.

In your study of the three full-body sculptures, pay particular attention to three artistic elements: facial expression, drapery, and *contrapposto* (the turning of the hip and leg away from the shoulders and the head). Hellenistic sculptors employed all three to add psychological insight, dramatic effect, and movement to their art. As you study the Hellenistic use of these artistic techniques, refer back to the Athenian *Maiden of the Erechtheum* in source 31 by way of comparison.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. Consider the bust of King Euthydemos. How does the sculptor present the king? What reaction do you think the sculptor desired to evoke from the viewer?
2. Compare the bust of Euthydemos with the portrait of Demarete on the silver coin in source 31. What conclusions follow from your comparative study?
3. Compare Sotades' rhyton (source 31) with *The Gaul and Wife*. How does each portray its subjects, and what responses does each artist expect to elicit from the viewer? What conclusions follow from your answers?
4. Consider the old woman and the boxer. How have their sculptors dealt with them? Compare them with the *Maiden of the Erechtheum*. Which strike you as more significant, the similarities or dissimilarities? What conclusions follow from your analysis?
5. Some commentators have characterized Hellenistic art as an attempt to create psychological portraits. Do any or all of these four works seem to fall



King Euthydemus I of Bactria



The Gaul and Wife



The Old Woman



The Boxer

into that category? If so, what was there about the Hellenistic World that might have led some artists to emphasize the individual human psyche?

6. If art is a window on the society that produces it, what do these four sculptures allow you to infer about the Hellenistic World?

Rome Viewed from the Underworld



33 ▼ Virgil, *THE AENEID*

Due to its victory over Carthage in the Second Punic War (218–201 B.C.E.), the Roman Republic emerged as the major power in the Mediterranean and an empire in fact, if not in name. Rome's acquisition of an empire had major repercussions at home, and the resultant strains triggered more than a century of class discord and civil war. The civil wars ended in 30 B.C.E., when Octavian, the great-nephew and adopted son of Julius Caesar (ca. 100–44 B.C.E.), defeated Mark Antony and became sole master of the Roman World. In 27 B.C.E. the Senate accorded him the title *Augustus* (Revered One), implying he possessed divine authority. Posterity remembers Octavian as *Caesar Augustus* (63 B.C.E.–14 C.E.), Rome's first emperor and the man who created and presided over the first generation of the *Pax Romana*, or Roman Peace.

The significance of the *Pax Romana* was not lost on Augustus's contemporaries, not that there was much danger of anyone overlooking it given Augustus's policy of using his age's leading artists and intellectuals to trumpet his accomplishments. Of these publicists of the Roman Peace, none was more significant than Publius Vergilius Maro (70–19 B.C.E.), better known as *Virgil*. Virgil was simply classical Rome's greatest poet, and his most important creation, the *Aeneid*, was an epic that centered on nothing less than the divinely ordained destiny of Rome. The poem tells the story of the warrior-hero Aeneas, a refugee from Troy, whose settlement in Italy, following a long series of trials and troubled travels, would lead ultimately to the foundation of Rome. As the title and topic might suggest, Virgil borrowed liberally from Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, but he never slavishly imitated his Greek models. Rather, Virgil crafted a unique Latin masterpiece that deserves recognition on its own merits as one of the Ancient World's greatest epics. Virgil devoted the last ten years of his life to the *Aeneid*, but as he lay dying he left instructions that it should be burned, believing it needed three additional years of revision and polishing. Happily, Augustus countermanded the deathbed wishes of this poetic perfectionist.

Our source comes from Book 6, the pivotal point of this epic in twelve books. Aeneas has just reached Italy. There, accompanied by the Sibyl of Cumae, an inspired prophetess of the god Apollo, he enters the Underworld to consult the spirit of his father Anchises. We begin with Aeneas and the Sibyl, having passed by Tartarus, the place of torment for the wicked, arriving at Elysium.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. How does Virgil's Underworld differ from that of Gilgamesh (Chapter 1, source 1)? From that of Homer (Chapter 2, source 12)?
2. Can you discover any possible influences on Virgil's religious thought? Review Chapter 3 in addressing this question.
3. What does your answer to question 2 allow you to infer about cross-cultural influences in the Augustan Age?
4. What do the last two excerpts from this source suggest about the Roman self-image in the Age of Augustus?

They arrived at a land of joy, the green gardens and blessed abodes of the Blissful Groves. Here a fuller air clothes the meadows with a violet luminescence, and they have their own sun and starlight. Some exercise their limbs on the grassy playing fields, contend in sports, and wrestle on the yellow sand. Others beat out dances with their feet and sing songs. . . . Here is a band of men who incurred wounds fighting for their fatherland. Here are they who remained pure in their priesthood as long as they lived. Here are they who were true poets and who spoke in ways worthy of Phoebus.¹ And here are they who improved life by the arts of their inventions. Here are they who merited by their service remembrance before all others. The brows of all are encircled with snowy-white garlands. . . .

But Father Anchises, deep in the verdant valley, was surveying with intent mind the imprisoned souls that were to ascend to the light above, and by chance was counting numbers of men — his beloved descendants, their fates and their fortunes, their ways and their works.

And when he saw Aeneas coming toward him across the flowery meadow, he eagerly stretched out both hands, while tears flowed down his cheeks and a cry slipped from his mouth. "Have you come at last, and has the devotion that your father has expected of you² conquered the path of adversity? My son, is it given to me to gaze on your face and to hear and respond in familiar

speech? . . ." Aeneas replied: "Your shade, Father, your sad shade, appearing to me so often drove me to steer toward these portals. My ships are at anchor on the Tyrrhenian Sea.³ Grant that I might clasp your hand, grant it, Father, and do not withdraw from our embrace." While thus speaking, his face was drenched with copious tears. Three times there he tried to put his arms about his neck; three times the shade, embraced in vain, escaped out of his hands like weightless winds and even more so like a winged dream.

And now Aeneas sees within a hidden valley a secluded grove, rustling forest thickets, and the River Lethe flowing past peaceful dwellings. Around it hovered peoples and individuals beyond count. . . . Startled by this sudden vision, the uncomprehending Aeneas asks for an account: What is that river over there? Who are those people who throng on its banks in such great numbers? Father Anchises then answers: "Spirits to whom Fate owes another body drink the soothing waters of deep amnesia at the River Lethe's stream. Indeed, for quite a while I have wanted to tell you about these and show them to you face to face and to count the offspring of my descendants, so that you might rejoice with me the more for having reached Italy." "Father, must we think that some souls, soaring upwards, travel from here to the upper world and once again return to bodily fetters? Why do these sad souls have such a dreadful longing for the light of

¹Phoebus Apollo, the god of prophecy and of poetry.

²Throughout this story Aeneas has consistently exhibited the virtue of *pietas*, or devotion to duty.

³That portion of the Mediterranean separating the islands of Corsica, Sardinia, and Sicily from the Italian Peninsula.

day?"⁴ "Surely, I will tell you, my son, and I will not hold you in suspense," replies Anchises, and he lays everything out in order, one by one.

"First of all, one intrinsic Spirit sustains the heavens and the Earth and the watery expanses, the shining globe of the moon and the Titanian stars,⁵ and one Mind flows through all its parts, drives the entire entity, and mingles with the mighty structure. From them⁶ are generated humanity and beasts, the lives of flying creatures, and those monsters that the sea contains beneath its marbled surface. Fire is their life force and their seeds originate in Heaven,⁷ inasmuch as sinful bodies do not hamper them, and earthly frames and mortal limbs do not render them sluggish. Bodies are the cause of fear and desire, of sorrow and joy, and souls cannot discern the light of Heaven when shut up in the gloom of a dark dungeon.⁸ Indeed, on the very last day when life has fled, all evil and all the ills of the body do not totally pass from these sad souls,⁹ for it must be the case that many evils, long set hard, are deeply engrained within them in ways beyond understanding. As a consequence, they are disciplined with punishments and pay the penalty for old evil ways. Some are hung, helplessly suspended before the winds; from others the stain of guilt is washed away under a swirling flood or burned off by fire.¹⁰ Each of us endures his own ghost.¹¹ Then we are released to wander through wide Elysium. A few of us possess the Fields of Happiness until, once the cycle of time is com-

pleted, the passing days have removed the hardened stain and have left unsoiled the ethereal sentient spirit and the fire of pure air.¹² The god summons all these in a vast procession to the River Lethe once the wheel of time has revolved a full thousand years, so that they might revisit the vaulted world above¹³ without memories and might begin to wish to return to bodily forms."¹⁴

Anchises finished speaking and drew his son, and the Sibyl along with him, into the midst of the crowded and murmuring throng. He took up a position on a knoll from where he could scan the entire long line and recognize their faces as they came.

"Come now, I will teach you about your destiny. I will make clear by my words what glory will eventually befall the progeny of Dardanus¹⁵ and what sort of descendants will spring from Italian stock¹⁶ — souls of renown who shall inherit our name. . . .

▷ Anchises begins to point out the souls of the great men, still awaiting rebirth, who will create Rome and bring it to glory. After describing Romulus, the son of Mars (the god of War) and founder of Rome, Anchises abandons a strict chronological sequence and jumps to Caesar Augustus, the second founder of Rome.

"This man, this is he whom so often you heard promised to you. This is Caesar Augustus, son of a god,¹⁷ who shall again establish a Golden

⁴These are the words of a world-weary Aeneas who has been exhausted by the trials he has undergone due to his devotion to duty.

⁵The sun and the stars.

⁶Spirit and Mind.

⁷Spirit and Mind spring from the primal element of fire (see note 10), and their seeds are particles of divine fire born out of heavenly air.

⁸The dungeon of the sinful, mortal body.

⁹Here Anchises picks up Aeneas's reference to "sad souls" and gives the term new meaning.

¹⁰In other words, sinful souls are cleansed in this purgatory by air, water, or fire, three of the four primal elements of the universe (the other being Earth). Irredeemably evil souls are condemned to eternal torment in Tartarus, the place that Aeneas just passed on his way to Elysium.

¹¹Each soul suffers in accord with its unique imperfections.

By using the term "we," Anchises implied he also has undergone this purgation.

¹²The soul (the sentient spirit) has been returned to its primal purity — the fire and air from which it was generated. See what Anchises says about the origins of Spirit and Mind (note 7).

¹³Earth, which is vaulted by the heavens.

¹⁴Were they to remember the miseries of life and the process of purgation they underwent after death, they would not want to return.

¹⁵The mythical founder of Troy.

¹⁶Aeneas's future descendants, who will bear both his Trojan blood and the blood of Lavinia, his Italian wife-to-be.

¹⁷Caesar Augustus was the great-nephew and adopted son of Julius Caesar, who had been declared a god after his death. Aeneas himself was half divine; his mother was Venus, the goddess of love.

Age in Latium¹⁸ amid the fields where Saturn once ruled.¹⁹ He shall extend his rule beyond the Garamantians²⁰ and the Indians. His dominion will extend beyond the paths of the zodiac and of the sun.²¹ . . . Even now, in anticipation of his coming as prophesied by the oracles, the kingdoms of the Caspian Sea²² and the region around Lake Moeotis²³ shudder in horror, and the seven mouths of the Nile²⁴ tremble in terror.²⁵ Yes, not even Alcides²⁶ strode over such a space of earth. . . . Do we still hesitate to assert our valor by action, or does fear forbid our settling on Italian soil?²⁷

▷ Anchises returns to a chronological description of the shades of future Roman heroes, beginning

¹⁸The region surrounding Rome, where the Latin people lived.

¹⁹According to Roman tradition, the Golden Age of Saturn was a primeval era of purity and simplicity — virtues that made Rome great. Saturn, originally an Italian god of agriculture, was deposed by his son Jupiter, king of the gods. Thereupon, Saturn fled to Latium, where he became its king, establishing a society that lacked weapons, money, walled cities, and all similar corrupting influences. During this era the fruits of the soil were gained without toil.

²⁰A people of Northeast Africa.

²¹Beyond the known world.

with Numa, an ancient king of Rome and its first lawgiver. After pointing out Fabius Maximus, whose delaying tactics saved Rome in the dark days of the Second Punic War, Anchises sums up the essence of Rome's unique genius:

“Others,²⁸ for so I believe, shall hammer out more delicately breathing likenesses from bronze and draw forth living faces from marble. Others shall plead their causes better, plot with a gauge the movement of the heavens, and describe the rising of the stars. But, Roman, remember that you must rule nations by your dominion. These will be your arts: to crown peace with civilization, to show mercy to the conquered, and to tame the proud by war.”

²²The Parthian Empire ruled the region around the Caspian Sea.

²³A reference to the steppe peoples north of the Black Sea.

²⁴The Nile Delta.

²⁵A reference to his victory over the forces of Cleopatra VII and Marc Antony at Actium.

²⁶Another name for the legendary hero Hercules. Like Hercules, Augustus performed civilizing tasks and was a mortal who was destined to become a god.

²⁷These two questions are directed to Aeneas: After seeing Augustus, can he have any hesitation as to following his destiny?

²⁸Namely, the Greeks.

Three Women in the Age of the Pax Romana



34 ▼ *THREE FUNERARY MONUMENTS*

Although Virgil would not have admitted it, the imperial system that Caesar Augustus established contained a number of inherent weaknesses. Despite those weaknesses, the Roman Peace held up rather well for two centuries. During that two-hundred-year period the empire expanded its borders significantly, reaching the apex of its expansion and prosperity under the so-called *Five Good Emperors* (96–180 C.E.).

The cosmopolitanism and wealth of this Mediterranean-wide empire of the second century C.E. are captured in the marble effigies of numerous men, women, and children whose haunting portraits grace thousands of extant funerary monuments scattered throughout the many lands that were part of the Roman Ecumene. Virgil accorded the Greeks first place of honor for their ability to “draw forth living faces from marble,” but he did sculptors from Italy and the many other regions of the empire a disservice by that gracious compliment. Sculptors through-

out the Roman Empire, but especially those native to Italy, raised sculptural portraiture to a high art in the Age of the Pax Romana. The faces that they crafted seem to breathe life, and this was why so many loving relatives commissioned these artists to carve memorials to their beloved dead.

The three reliefs (raised carvings on flat backgrounds) that appear here give us a taste of this artistry, but more than that, they provide intimate glimpses into the second-century empire's diverse population.

Our first monument is the marble tombstone of Petronia Hedone and her son Lucius Petronius Philemon, which was erected just outside Rome in the period 110–120 C.E. The naturalism of this piece is striking. Consider Petronia's styled coiffure, facial signs of aging, and demeanor, as well as her son's fleshy, boyish features. Here we have two distinct individuals who seem alive even in death.

Our second sculpture is the marble grave *stele*, or upright stone monument, of Sosibia, daughter of Eubios of Kephissia, which was erected near Athens around 160–170 C.E. A number of symbols in the sculpture show her to have been a devotee, and probably a priestess, of the goddess Isis: the ritual rattle, or *sistrum*, in her right hand; the bucket of sacred water from the Nile in her left hand; and her mantle with its central knot and fringe.

The Hellenistic and Roman eras witnessed large numbers of people turning to *mystery religions* that offered comfort in an often hostile world and the promise of relief, both on Earth and in the hereafter, from the ills and sorrows that attend all humans. The attraction of these religions, which largely originated in the eastern Mediterranean and Southwest Asia but spread throughout the Roman Empire, became pronounced in the first century C.E., when the Greco-Roman World became increasingly vast and complex, thereby contributing to a high level of anxiety and alienation. As the empire began to undergo frightening challenges from the late second century onward, conversions to the empire's many mystery religions multiplied many times over.

Members of the various mystery religions believed that, through a process of conversion and ritual initiation, a devotee was transformed into a new person. By virtue of that transformation, or rebirth, the new member was admitted to the religion's mysteries, or secret knowledge that led to everlasting tranquility. Membership in this select body of initiates provided a believer with the immediate support of a cohesive community of like-minded individuals and the promise of personal salvation. The various savior deities who offered such aid to their worshipers included *Mithras*, an Iranian sun god whose cult was open only to men, and *Cybele*, or the Great Mother, a goddess from Anatolia. Most popular of all was the goddess *Isis*, whose temples could be found throughout the empire. Isis originated more than twenty-five hundred years earlier in Egypt's Old Kingdom as the consort of Osiris (Chapter 1, sources 3 and 9), but in the Hellenistic Era she assimilated the religious identities and functions of many foreign goddesses to emerge transformed into an ecumenical loving mother of all humanity. In the words of Lucius Apuleius, a North African worshiper of the goddess and a contemporary of Sosibia, Isis was "the Mother of all nature, the Mistress of all the elements, the First-Born of the ages, the Supreme Deity, Queen of the dead, the foremost heavenly being, the unchanging manifestation of all the gods and goddesses."

Our third memorial is the limestone effigy of Aththaia, daughter of Malchos, which was crafted at the city of Palmyra in Syria during the second half of the second century C.E. In this portrait bust, Aththaia wears native Palmyran robes and headdress and is bedecked with jewelry. The wealth suggested by her garments and accessories was not unusual for Palmyra, which was a major commercial center along the fabled Silk Road.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. Review the *Aeneid*. Does Petronia Hedone's portrait express any of the Roman values and qualities that Virgil celebrated?
2. Compare Sosibia with the *Maiden of the Erechtheum*. In what ways, if any, is her effigy similar to this Hellenic masterpiece? In what ways does it differ? What do those similarities and differences tell you?
3. From the perspective of Rome, Aththaia might well be the most exotic of this female triad. How does she differ from the other two women, and what do those differences suggest?
4. Notwithstanding their differences, do these women share any qualities? Which seem more significant, their differences or their similarities? What do you conclude from your answers? In addressing these issues, use only visual evidence from the sculptures.



Petronia Hedone and Son



Aththaia



Sosibia

Han China

In 2 C.E. an imperial census counted 12,233,062 families, or approximately 60 million people, residing in China. A Roman imperial census of 14 C.E. recorded 4,937,000 citizens of the empire. Assuming that full-fledged citizens of Rome constituted less than 10 percent of the empire's total population at that time, it is reasonable to conclude that the Roman Empire contained 50 to 60 million people in the early decades of the first century C.E. Therefore, as we survey Eurasia around the turn of the millennium, we see two massive empires of about equal size and population at the ends of this great land mass. For the next two centuries Han China and Rome dominated their respective regions, and although each experienced periods of crisis, each also offered its subjects fairly stable government and a degree of prosperity.

The Han Dynasty reigned during one of China's golden ages, creating a political and social order based on a synthesis of Legalist and Confucian principles. It expanded China's influence into Korea, Vietnam, and across the reaches of Central Asia. It presided over a general economic upswing, in spite of its expansionist policies, and witnessed a period of rich cultural productivity. Han China flourished for close to four centuries, but in the end, like the Roman Empire, the dynasty and its empire collapsed, the victim of internal instabilities and invasions.

The age of Han was not one period but two. From 202 B.C.E. to 9 C.E. the Former Han ruled China, and its most powerful and important emperor was *Han Wudi*, the Martial Emperor of Han, who reigned from 141 to 87 B.C.E. His domestic and foreign policies provided his successors for the next two thousand years with *the* model of aggressive imperial greatness. Following an interlude in which Wang Mang (9–23 C.E.) managed to wrest the imperial throne temporarily from the Han family, the dynasty returned to power in the form of the Later, or Eastern, Han (25–220 C.E.). After the first century, however, domestic and frontier conditions deteriorated. From 88 C.E. onward, the family was plagued by a series of ineffective rulers.

By 220, when the Han Dynasty formally came to an end, local lords and invaders from the steppes ruled over a fragmented China. The stability and unity of earlier Han was only a memory as China was plunged into a social, economic, and political chaos that would last for about three and one-half centuries. These four hundred years of disruption following the collapse of Han have often been likened to the so-called Dark Ages that ensued after the disintegration of Roman imperial unity in the West, although the differences between the two are more significant than any superficial parallels.

Establishing an Imperial Confucian Academy



35 ▼ *Sima Qian,*

THE RECORDS OF THE GRAND HISTORIAN

During its short existence the Qin Dynasty had experimented with various procedures for recruiting competent and loyal officials. The early emperors of Former Han and their chief ministers continued the search for rational ways of discovering persons of ability. In 124 B.C.E. Emperor Han Wudi established an important precedent when he decreed that proven knowledge of one of the Confucian Classics would be a basis for promotion into the imperial civil service and created a rudimentary imperial academy for educating aspiring scholar-officials in the various fields of Confucian learning. By this act he set in motion a process whereby centuries later Confucianism became the empire's ideological framework.

What began modestly as an academy designed to educate fifty young men became an institution that numbered upward of thirty thousand students in the last days of Later Han. Relatively few of these scholars, however, were called to the emperor's service, and the examinations Han Wudi initiated were irregularly held under his Han successors. Government office was still largely the privilege of the landed aristocracy right to the end of the Later Han Era. Only in the age of the *Tang* Dynasty (618–907) did a regular system of civil service examinations emerge as a consequence of the imperial court's successful attempt to break the power of the traditional landed aristocracy by creating a new class of salaried imperial officials. By the early tenth century education in all the Confucian Classics was virtually the only route to civil office. China had not only established the world's first-known civil service examination system, it had also, for the most part, developed a system that conferred civil authority on a class of people who shared a common education and philosophy. This class of Confucian *literarchs* (literary rulers) would, more often than not, control China into the early twentieth century.

In the following selection, Sima Qian, one of Former Han's greatest Confucian scholars (whom we saw in Chapter 4, source 25), traces the vicissitudes of Confucianism as a practiced political doctrine from the days of Master Kong down to the time of the contemporary emperor, Han Wudi.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. What vicissitudes did the school of Confucius experience in the four centuries following his death?
2. How were students selected for admission to the emperor's academy, and what sort of person was to be admitted?
3. What do these standards for admission suggest about the values and purposes of Confucian education in the era of Han Wudi?
4. It has been said that by approving this proposal, Han Wudi joined Confucianism with Legalism. Do you agree? Why or why not?

5. Consider what Confucius says in *The Analects* about government and the superior man (Chapter 4, source 24). How do you think he would respond to this imperial edict?

After the death of Confucius, his band of seventy disciples broke up and scattered among the feudal lords,¹ the more important ones becoming tutors and high ministers to the rulers, the lesser ones acting as friends and teachers to the lower officials, while some went into retirement and were never seen again. . . . Among the feudal lords, however, only Marquis Wen of Wei had any fondness for literature. Conditions continued to deteriorate until the time of the First Emperor of the Qin; the empire was divided among a number of states, all warring with each other, and no one had any use for the arts of the Confucians. Only in Qi and Lu² did scholars appear to carry on the teachings and save them from oblivion. During the reigns of Kings Wei and Xuan of Qi (378–323 B.C.), Mencius³ and Xun Qing⁴ and their respective groups both honored the doctrines of the Master and worked to ex-

pand and enrich them, winning prominence among the men of the time by their learning.

Then followed the twilight⁵ days of the Qin emperor, who burned the *Odes* and *Documents* and buried the scholars alive,⁶ and from this time on the texts of the Six Classics⁷ of the Confucians were damaged and incomplete. . . .

Later, when Gaozu⁸ had defeated Xiang Yu,⁹ he marched north and surrounded the state of Lu with his troops, but the Confucian scholars of Lu went on as always, reciting and discussing their books, practicing rites and music, and never allowing the sound of strings and voices to die out.¹⁰ . . . And when the Han came to power, these scholars were at last allowed to study and teach their Classics freely and to demonstrate the proper rituals. . . .

Shusun Tong¹¹ drew up the ceremonial for the Han court and was rewarded with the post of

¹Autonomous local lords who had private armies during the *Age of the Warring States* (403–221 B.C.E.).

²Two of the Warring States.

³*Mencius* (the Latinized form of *Mengzi*, or Master Meng), lived from around 372 to about 289 B.C.E. and, except for Confucius, was the most important theorist in the history of Confucian philosophy. His basic doctrines were that humans are innately good and that each person has the potential to become a sage. From these two principles he evolved a political philosophy of benevolent government.

⁴*Master Xun Qing* (ca. 300–235 B.C.E.) was the last great philosopher in the formative age of Confucian classical thought. Unlike Confucius and Mencius, he set his ideas down systematically in a detailed book. Although he might have been the most original and systematic of the three great Confucian sages, the Chinese valued his teachings far less than those of Confucius and Mencius because he was too much of a free thinker, rejecting the existence of spirits and doubting that humans are innately good.

⁵"Twilight" because, in Han Confucian eyes, this brief and evil reign was more the last stage of the Zhou Era than a full-fledged dynasty itself. It had not followed the classic pattern, established in the first three dynasties, of vigorous growth, maturity, and decay (see the *Mandate of Heaven*, Chapter 1, source 5).

⁶In 213 Emperor Qin Shi Huangdi issued an edict banning essentially all non-Legalist literature. According to the traditional account, 460 scholars were buried alive for refus-

ing to hand over copies of the Confucian Classics. Recently, however, at least one historian has questioned whether the scholars were executed by inhumation or simply killed by other means.

⁷*The Classic of History* (Chapter 1, source 5), *The Classic of Odes* (source 6), *The Analects* (Chapter 4, source 24), *The Classic of Changes*, *The Classic of Rites*, and *The Spring and Autumn Annals*. *The Classic of Changes*, or *Yi Jing*, is a work of divination that enjoys popularity today among Western readers; *The Classic of Rites* is a compilation of proper rituals. See note 19 for a description of *The Spring and Autumn Annals*. Although *The Analects* always remained a revered book of Confucian wisdom, the other five Classics assumed greater importance during the Age of Later Han and collectively emerged as the *Wu Jing* — the core of the Confucian canon.

⁸*Gaozu* means "high ancestor" and was the honorific title of Liu Bang, the first Han emperor (r. 202–195 B.C.E.).

⁹The brilliant but erratic noble whom the commoner Liu Bang defeated in a contest for the empire after the fall of Qin.

¹⁰Confucians emphasize music for several reasons: This art from the revered past creates harmony out of dissonance, soothes the hearer's troubled spirit, and raises the mind to a higher plane.

¹¹A Confucian scholar who served both the Qin and early Han rulers.

master of ritual, while all the other scholars who assisted him were likewise given preferential treatment in the government. The emperor sighed over the neglected state of learning and would have done more to encourage its revival, but at the time there was still considerable turmoil within the empire and the region within the four seas had not yet been set at peace. Likewise, during the reigns of Emperor Zu¹² and Empress Lü¹³ there was still no leisure to attend to the matter of government schools. Moreover, the high officials at this time were all military men who had won their distinction in battle.

With the accession of Emperor Wen,¹⁴ Confucian scholars began little by little to be summoned and employed in the government, although Emperor Wen himself rather favored the Legalist teachings on personnel organization and control. Emperor Jing¹⁵ made no effort to employ Confucian scholars, and his mother, Empress Dowager Dou,¹⁶ was an advocate of the teachings of the Yellow Emperor¹⁷ and Laozi. Thus various scholars were appointed to fill the posts of court councilor and to answer questions, but they had no prospects of advancement.

When the present emperor came to the throne there were a number of enlightened Confucian scholars . . . at court. The emperor was much attracted by their ideas and accordingly sent out a summons for scholars of moral worth and literary ability to take service in the government.

After Empress Dowager Dou passed away, the marquis of Wuan, Tianfan,¹⁸ became chancellor.

He rejected the doctrines of the Daoists, the Legalists, and the other philosophical schools, and invited several hundred Confucian scholars and literary men to take service in the government. Among them was Gongsun Hong who, because of his knowledge of the *Spring and Autumn Annals*,¹⁹ advanced from the rank of commoner to that of one of the three highest ministers in the government and was installed as marquis of Pingjin. Scholars throughout the empire saw which way the wind was blowing and did all they could to follow his example.

As a scholar official, Gongsun Hong, who held the post of imperial secretary, was disturbed that the teachings of Confucius were being neglected and not put into greater practice and he therefore submitted the following memorial:²⁰

The chancellor and the imperial secretary wish to make this statement. Your Majesty has issued an edict which reads:

"I have heard that the people are to be guided by rites and led to the practice of virtue through music, and that the institution of marriage is the basis of the family. Yet at the present time rites have fallen into disuse and music has declined, a fact which grieves me deeply. Therefore I have invited men of outstanding moral worth and wide learning from all over the empire to come and take service at court. Let the officials in charge of ritual encourage learning, hold discussions, and gather all the information they can to encourage the revival of rites in order to act as leaders of the empire. Let the master of ritual consult with the erudites²¹ and their

¹²Known as the *Filial Emperor*, he reigned from 195 to 188 B.C.E., but his mother, the Empress Dowager Lü, held all real power. See note 13.

¹³The widow of Han Gaozu (note 8), she ruled China as the power behind the throne between 195 and 180 B.C.E.

¹⁴Wen the Filial (r. 180–157 B.C.E.), the fourth son of Han Gaozu and the first strong emperor since his father's death fifteen years earlier.

¹⁵Wen's successor, who ruled from 157 to 141 B.C.E.

¹⁶This powerful woman, who died in 135 B.C.E., sponsored the study of Daoist teachings at the courts of her husband and son.

¹⁷See Chapter 4, source 26. This legendary predynastic Sage

Emperor was believed to be, along with Laozi, the founder of Daoism (Chapter 4, source 23).

¹⁸Maternal uncle of Han Wudi.

¹⁹A terse chronicle of events covering the period 722 to 481 B.C.E. and written from the perspective of Confucius' home state of Lu. This Confucian Classic was also believed to be authored by the Great Master. There is no reason to believe he had a hand in composing it, but apparently he studied and admired the work.

²⁰A memorandum.

²¹Erudites (*boshi*) were scholar-advisors to the imperial court by virtue of the fact that each was a specialist in one of the Confucian Classics.

students on how to promote the spread of virtue in the countryside and open the way for men of outstanding talent."

In accordance with this edict we have respectfully discussed the matter with the master of ritual Kong Zang, the erudite Ping, and others, and they have told us that, according to their information, it was the custom under the Three Dynasties of antiquity to set up schools for instruction in the villages. In the Xia dynasty these were called *xiao*, in the Shang dynasty *xu*, and in the Zhou dynasty *xiang*. These schools encouraged goodness by making it known to the court and censured evil by applying punishments. Thus it was the officials of the capital who took the initiative in instructing and educating the people, and virtue spread from the court outwards to the provinces.

Now Your Majesty, manifesting supreme virtue and displaying a profound intelligence worthy to rank with that of heaven and earth, has sought to rectify human relations, encourage learning, revive the former rites, promote instruction in goodness, and open the way for men of worth so that the people of the four directions²² may be swayed to virtue. This is indeed the way to lay the foundations for an era of great peace.

In earlier times, however, the instruction provided by the government was incomplete and the rites were not fully carried out. We therefore beg that the previous official system be utilized to increase the spread of instruction. In order to fill the offices of erudite we suggest that fifty additional students be selected and declared exempt from the usual labor services. The master of ritual shall be charged with the selection of these students from among men of the people who are eighteen years of age or older and who are of good character and upright behavior. In order to supply candidates for the selection, the

governors, prime ministers, heads, and magistrates of the various provinces, kingdoms, districts, marches,²³ and feudal cities shall recommend to the two thousand picul officials²⁴ in their respective regions any men who are fond of learning, show respect for their superiors, adhere to the teachings of the government, and honor the customs of their village, and whose actions in no way reflect discredit upon their reputations. The two thousand picul officials shall in turn make a careful examination of the men recommended; those found worthy shall then be sent in company with the local accounting officials when the latter come to the capital to make their reports, and shall there be presented to the master of ritual. They shall then receive instruction in the same manner as the regular students of the erudites.

At the end of a year, all of them shall be examined. Those who have mastered one or more of the Classics shall be assigned to fill vacancies among the scholar officials in the provinces or among the officers . . . who serve under the master of ritual. If there are any outstanding students who qualify for the post of palace attendant, the master of ritual shall present their names to the throne. In this way men of exceptional talent and ability will be brought at once to the attention of the ruler. If, on the contrary, there are any who have not applied themselves to their studies, whose ability is inferior, or who have failed to master even one Classic, they shall be summarily dismissed. In addition, if there are any among the recommending officials who have failed to carry out their duties properly, we suggest that they be punished. . . .

The emperor signified his approval of this proposal, and from this time on the number of literary men who held positions as ministers and high officials in the government increased remarkably.

²²That is, throughout all China.

²³Frontier regions.

²⁴A *picul* was 133.33 pounds of grain. Every office was graded according to its annual salary, and most salaries

ranged between two thousand and one hundred piculs a year, although the emperor's chief counselor received ten thousand piculs. Salaries were paid partly in grain and partly in silk and cash equivalents.

A Woman's Place as Viewed by a Female Confucian



36 ▼ *Ban Zhao, LESSONS FOR WOMEN*

Education in the Confucian Classics increasingly became one of several avenues to a position of social and political power in Han China. Confucian doctrine, however, did not accord women a status equal to that of men, and women generally were regarded as unworthy or incapable of a literary education. The Confucian Classics themselves say little about women, which suggests how little they mattered in the scheme of Confucian values. Most Confucians accepted women's subservience to men as natural and proper. In their view, failure to maintain a proper relationship between two such obviously unequal persons as husband and wife or brother and sister would result in a breakdown of all the rules of propriety and, as a consequence, social disharmony.

Yet this was only part of the traditional Chinese view of women. Both Confucian doctrine and Chinese society at large accorded women, as both mothers and mothers-in-law, a good deal of honor, and with that honor came power within the family structure. In every age, moreover, a handful of extraordinary women managed to acquire literary educations or otherwise achieve positions of far-ranging influence and authority despite social constraints. The foremost female Confucian of the Age of Han was *Ban Zhao* (ca. 45–116 C.E.), younger sister of the court historian Ban Gu (32–92). Upon Gu's death, Zhao served as imperial historian under Emperor Han Hedi (r. 88–105) and completed her brother's *Han Annals*, a history of the Former Han Dynasty, which is generally regarded as second only to the historical work of Sima Qian (sources 25 and 35). Ban Zhao also served as an advisor on state matters to Empress Deng, who assumed power as regent for her infant son in 106.

Madame Ban was the daughter of the widely respected writer and administrator Ban Biao (3–54) and received her elementary education from her literate mother while still a child in her father's house. Otherwise her early life appears to have been quite conventional. She married at the age of fourteen, thereby becoming the lowest-ranking member of her husband's family, and bore children. Although her husband died young, Ban Zhao never remarried, devoting herself instead to literary pursuits and acquiring a reputation for scholarship and stylistic grace that eventually brought her to the imperial court.

Among her many literary works, Ban Zhao composed a commentary on the popular *Lives of Admirable Women* by Liu Xiang (77–6 B.C.E.) and later in life produced her most famous work, the *Nü Jie*, or *Lessons for Women*, which purports to be an instructional manual on feminine behavior and virtue for her daughters. In fact, she intended it for a much wider audience. Realizing that Confucian texts contained little in the way of specific and practical guidelines for a woman's everyday life, Ban Zhao sought to fill that void with a coherent set of rules for women, especially young women.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. What does Ban Zhao tell us about the status of daughters-in-law? How has she escaped from the fears of such servitude?
2. According to Ban Zhao, what rules of propriety should govern a marriage?
3. What does Ban Zhao consider the principal duty of a husband? Of a wife? How and why are they complementary parts of the natural order of the universe? In addressing this last question, review Chapter 4, source 26.
4. Consider her claim that she is inherently unintelligent. Does she mean it? Why do you think she makes such statements?
5. Does Ban Zhao advocate any departure from tradition? If so, what is it, and what is its purpose?
6. What was there about Ban Zhao's essay that caused it to be so highly regarded by Confucian scholars over the following centuries?

I, the unworthy writer, am unsophisticated, unenlightened, and by nature unintelligent, but I am fortunate both to have received not a little favor from my scholarly father, and to have had a cultured mother and instructresses upon whom to rely for a literary education as well as for training in good manners. More than forty years have passed since at the age of fourteen I took up the dustpan and the broom in the Cao family.¹ During this time with trembling heart I feared constantly that I might disgrace my parents, and that I might multiply difficulties for both the women and the men of my husband's family. Day and night I was distressed in heart, but I labored without confessing weariness. Now and hereafter, however, I know how to escape from such fears.

Being careless, and by nature stupid, I taught and trained my children without system. Consequently I fear that my son Gu may bring disgrace upon the Imperial Dynasty by whose Holy Grace he has unprecedentedly received the extraordinary privilege of wearing the Gold and the Purple, a privilege for the attainment of which by my son, I a humble subject never even hoped. Nevertheless, now that he is a man and able to plan his own life, I need not again have

concern for him. But I do grieve that you, my daughters, just now at the age for marriage, have not at this time had gradual training and advice; that you still have not learned the proper customs for married women. I fear that by failure in good manners in other families you will humiliate both your ancestors and your clan. I am now seriously ill, life is uncertain. As I have thought of you all in so untrained a state, I have been uneasy many a time for you. At hours of leisure I have composed . . . these instructions under the title, "Lessons for Women." In order that you may have something wherewith to benefit your persons, I wish every one of you, my daughters, each to write out a copy for yourself.

From this time on every one of you strive to practice these lessons.

HUMILITY

On the third day after the birth of a girl the ancients observed three customs: first to place the baby below the bed; second to give her a pottersherd² with which to play; and third to announce her birth to her ancestors by an offering. Now to

¹The family into which she married.

²A piece of broken pottery.

lay the baby below the bed plainly indicated that she is lowly and weak, and should regard it as her primary duty to humble herself before others. To give her potsherds with which to play indubitably signified that she should practice labor and consider it her primary duty to be industrious. To announce her birth before her ancestors clearly meant that she ought to esteem as her primary duty the continuation of the observance of worship in the home.

These three ancient customs epitomize a woman's ordinary way of life and the teachings of the traditional ceremonial rites and regulations. Let a woman modestly yield to others; let her respect others; let her put others first, herself last. Should she do something good, let her not mention it; should she do something bad, let her not deny it. Let her bear disgrace; let her even endure when others speak or do evil to her. Always let her seem to tremble and to fear. When a woman follows such maxims as these, then she may be said to humble herself before others.

Let a woman retire late to bed, but rise early to duties; let her not dread tasks by day or by night. Let her not refuse to perform domestic duties whether easy or difficult. That which must be done, let her finish completely, tidily, and systematically. When a woman follows such rules as these, then she may be said to be industrious.

Let a woman be correct in manner and upright in character in order to serve her husband. Let her live in purity and quietness of spirit, and attend to her own affairs. Let her love not gossip and silly laughter. Let her cleanse and purify and arrange in order the wine and the food for the offerings to the ancestors. When a woman observes such principles as these, then she may be said to continue ancestral worship.

No woman who observes these three fundamentals of life has ever had a bad reputation or has fallen into disgrace. If a woman fails to ob-

serve them, how can her name be honored; how can she but bring disgrace upon herself?

HUSBAND AND WIFE

The Way of husband and wife is intimately connected with *Yin* and *Yang*,³ and relates the individual to gods and ancestors. Truly it is the great principle of Heaven and Earth, and the great basis of human relationships. Therefore the "Rites"⁴ honor union of man and woman; and in the "Book of Poetry"⁵ the "First Ode" manifests the principle of marriage. For these reasons the relationships cannot but be an important one.

If a husband be unworthy, then he possesses nothing by which to control his wife. If a wife be unworthy, then she possesses nothing with which to serve her husband. If a husband does not control his wife, then the rules of conduct manifesting his authority are abandoned and broken. If a wife does not serve her husband, then the proper relationship between men and women and the natural order of things are neglected and destroyed. As a matter of fact the purpose of these two [the controlling of women by men, and the serving of men by women] is the same.

Now examine the gentlemen of the present age. They only know that wives must be controlled, and that the husband's rules of conduct manifesting his authority must be established. They therefore teach their boys to read books and study histories. But they do not in the least understand that husbands and masters must also be served, and that the proper relationship and the rites should be maintained.

Yet only to teach men and not to teach women — is that not ignoring the essential relation between them? According to the "Rites," it is the rule to begin to teach children to read at the age of eight years, and by the age of fifteen years they ought then to be ready for cultural training. Only

³See Chapter 4, source 26.

⁴*The Classic of Rites* (see source 35, note 7).

⁵*The Classic of Odes* (Chapter 1, source 6).

why should it not be that girls' education as well as boys' be according to this principle?

RESPECT AND CAUTION

As *Yin* and *Yang* are not of the same nature, so man and woman have different characteristics. The distinctive quality of the *Yang* is rigidity; the function of the *Yin* is yielding. Man is honored for strength; a woman is beautiful on account of her gentleness. Hence there arose the common saying: "A man though born like a wolf may, it is feared, become a weak monstrosity; a woman though born like a mouse may, it is feared, become a tiger."

Now for self-culture nothing equals respect for others. To counteract firmness nothing equals compliance. Consequently it can be said that the Way of respect and acquiescence is woman's most important principle of conduct. So respect may be defined as nothing other than holding on to that which is permanent; and acquiescence nothing other than being liberal and generous. Those who are steadfast in devotion know that they should stay in their proper places; those who are liberal and generous esteem others, and honor and serve them.

If husband and wife have the habit of staying together, never leaving one another, and following each other around within the limited space of their own rooms, then they will lust after and take liberties with one another. From such action improper language will arise between the two. This kind of discussion may lead to licentiousness. Out of licentiousness will be born a heart of disrespect to the husband. Such a result comes from not knowing that one should stay in one's proper place.

Furthermore, affairs may be either crooked or straight; words may be either right or wrong. Straightforwardness cannot but lead to quarreling; crookedness cannot but lead to accusation. If there are really accusations and quarrels, then undoubtedly there will be angry affairs. Such a result comes from not esteeming others, and not honoring and serving them.

If wives suppress not contempt for husbands, then it follows that such wives rebuke and scold their husbands. If husbands stop not short of anger, then they are certain to beat their wives. The correct relationship between husband and wife is based upon harmony and intimacy, and conjugal love is grounded in proper union. Should actual blows be dealt, how could matrimonial relationship be preserved? Should sharp words be spoken, how could conjugal love exist? If love and proper relationship both be destroyed, then husband and wife are divided.

WOMANLY QUALIFICATIONS

A woman ought to have four qualifications: (1) womanly virtue; (2) womanly words; (3) womanly bearing; and (4) womanly work. Now what is called womanly virtue need not be brilliant ability, exceptionally different from others. Womanly words need be neither clever in debate nor keen in conversation. Womanly appearance requires neither a pretty nor a perfect face and form. Womanly work need not be work done more skillfully than that of others.

To guard carefully her chastity; to control circumspectly her behavior; in every motion to exhibit modesty; and to model each act on the best usage, this is womanly virtue.

To choose her words with care; to avoid vulgar language; to speak at appropriate times; and not to weary others with much conversation, may be called the characteristics of womanly words.

To wash and scrub filth away; to keep clothes and ornaments fresh and clean; to wash the head and bathe the body regularly; and to keep the person free from disgraceful filth, may be called the characteristics of womanly bearing.

With whole-hearted devotion to sew and to weave; to love not gossip and silly laughter; in cleanliness and order to prepare the wine and food for serving guests, may be called the characteristics of womanly work.

These four qualifications characterize the greatest virtue of a woman. No woman can afford to be without them. In fact they are very

easy to possess if a woman only treasure them in her heart. The ancients had a saying: "Is Love afar off? If I desire love, then love is at hand!" So can it be said of these qualifications. . . .

IMPLICIT OBEDIENCE

Whenever the mother-in-law says, "Do not do that," and if what she says is right, unquestionably the daughter-in-law obeys. Whenever the mother-in-law says, "Do that," even if what she

says is wrong, still the daughter-in-law submits unfailingly to the command.

Let a woman not act contrary to the wishes and the opinions of parents-in-law about right and wrong; let her not dispute with them what is straight and what is crooked. Such docility may be called obedience which sacrifices personal opinion. Therefore the ancient book, "A Pattern for Women," says: "If a daughter-in-law who follows the wishes of her parents-in-law is like an echo and a shadow, how could she not be praised?"

India in the Age of Empires

In its long history, India has been politically fragmented more often than not. Between the third century B.C.E. and the sixth century C.E., however, India witnessed the rise and flowering of two great native empires, each of which participated in the general interchange of goods, ideas, and peoples that characterized this age of Afro-Eurasian interchange.

First there was the mighty *Mauryan Empire* (ca. 315–183 B.C.E.), which controlled all but the most southern portions of the subcontinent. Centuries later the *Gupta Empire* (320–ca. 550 C.E.) arose, centered on the Ganges River in the northeast but exercising authority over most of northern and central India. Although neither equaled the Han and Roman empires in size, military power, or longevity, both Indian empires provided peace and a general prosperity based in part on energetic administration and benign social intervention. At the height of the Gupta Empire under Chandragupta II (r. ca. 376–415 C.E.), India possibly was the most prosperous and peaceful society in the entire world. China was then immersed in an interdynastic time of troubles; Greco-Roman civilization was undergoing severe stresses at every level; and the powerful *Sassanian Empire* of Persia was embroiled in internal religious turmoil and wars on its frontiers.

Between these two homebred imperial periods, India underwent a series of invasions from the northwest that resulted in portions of northern India falling under the domination of alien rulers and being joined to important Central Asian kingdoms and empires. The first of these invaders were Greeks from Bactria (source 32), who came in the early second century B.C.E. and established a number of competing kingdoms in northern India. The Greco-Bactrians did not remain in India long. They soon gave way to various nomadic invaders from East Asia, whose lives had been disrupted by the emergence of Chinese imperialism in the late third and second centuries B.C.E. and also by intertribal conflicts.

The most significant of the new invaders were the *Yuezhi*, who created the *Kushana Empire* toward the end of the first century B.C.E. The Kushana, whose

imperial focus was always Central Asia, lasted into the third century C.E., and during their centuries of empire provided India with connections to Southwest Asia and China. Much of that interaction was the peaceful exchange of goods and ideas, but Chinese annals also tell how General Ban Chao, brother of the historians Ban Gu and Ban Zhao (source 36), destroyed a Yuezhi army in 90 C.E. when the Kushana emperor launched a retaliatory strike against the Chinese after he was refused the hand of a Han princess.

All of these important political developments should not blind us to the fact that the most significant developments taking place in India during the period 300 B.C.E.–500 C.E. were cultural. The Gupta Era is especially important in this regard and is rightly acknowledged as one of traditional India's golden ages.

The Softening Effects of Dharma



37 ▼ *Asoka, ROCK AND PILLAR EDICTS*

As Alexander the Great and his Macedonian generals pulled back from northwest India, a local lord, Chandragupta Maurya (r. ca. 315–281 B.C.E.), began the process of carving out what would become the greatest of India's ancient empires. Under the founder and his son, Bindusara, the empire expanded and functioned with brutal efficiency. Around 269 B.C.E. Bindusara's son *Asoka* (r. ca. 269–232) inherited the throne and initially continued his family's tradition of imperial aggression.

In the eighth year of his reign, however, he underwent a spiritual conversion when he beheld the bloodshed and misery that resulted from his conquest of the land of Kalinga, along India's southeastern coast. As a consequence, Asoka embraced the teachings of the Buddha and embarked on a new policy of government. Probably inspired by the public monuments of the kings of Persia, Asoka publicized his change of heart and new imperial policies in a series of engraved rock and pillar inscriptions scattered throughout his lands.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. Is there any evidence in this source that Asoka promoted Buddhist missionary activities? Be specific.
2. What was Asoka's attitude and policy toward all non-Buddhist religions and ceremonies?
3. Following his conversion, what did Asoka consider to be the purpose of good government? What structures and policies did he institute in order to achieve his vision?
4. Asoka saw himself as a follower of the Buddha's Law of Righteousness (*Dharma*). Review source 19 in Chapter 3. Based on your reading of these two lessons by the Buddha, respond to the following questions: Where

would the Buddha agree with Asoka's policies and beliefs? Where would he disagree with Asoka? What would be the Buddha's overall evaluation of Asoka's understanding of Buddhist teachings?

5. Imagine that three Chinese travelers — a Confucian, a Legalist, and a Daoist — read these inscriptions. What would be their reactions?

ROCK EDICT XIII

The Kalinga country was conquered by King Priyadarsi,¹ Beloved of the Gods, in the eighth year of his reign. One hundred and fifty thousand persons were carried away captive, one hundred thousand were slain, and many times that number died.

Immediately after the Kalingas had been conquered, King Priyadarsi became intensely devoted to the study of Dharma,² to the love of Dharma, and to the inculcation of Dharma.

The Beloved of the Gods, conqueror of the Kalingas, is moved to remorse now. For he has felt profound sorrow and regret because the conquest of a people previously unconquered involves slaughter, death, and deportation.

But there is a more important reason for the King's remorse. The Brahmanas³ and Sramanas⁴ as well as the followers of other religions and householders — who all practiced obedience to superiors, parents, and teachers, and proper courtesy and firm devotion to friends, acquaintances, companions, relatives, slaves, and servants — all suffer from the injury, slaughter, and deportation inflicted on their loved ones. Even those who escaped calamity themselves are deeply afflicted by the misfortunes suffered by those friends, acquaintances, companions, and relatives

for whom they feel an undiminished affection. Thus all men share in the misfortune, and this weighs on King Priyadarsi's mind. . . .

Therefore, even if the number of people who were killed or who died or who were carried away in the Kalinga war had been only one one-hundredth or one one-thousandth of what it actually was, this would still have weighed on the King's mind.

King Priyadarsi now thinks that even a person who wrongs him must be forgiven for wrongs that can be forgiven.

King Priyadarsi seeks to induce even the forest peoples⁵ who have come under his dominion to adopt this way of life and this ideal. He reminds them, however, that he exercises the power to punish, despite his repentance, in order to induce them to desist from their crimes and escape execution.

For King Priyadarsi desires security, self-control, impartiality, and cheerfulness for all living creatures.

King Priyadarsi considers moral conquest the most important conquest. He has achieved this moral conquest repeatedly both here and among the peoples living beyond the borders of his kingdom, even as far away as six hundred *yojanas*,⁶ where the Yona [Greek] king Antiyoka⁷ rules, and even beyond Antiyoka in the realms of the

¹Asoka's throne name, it means "one who sees to the good of others."

²Sources 17, 18, and 19 of Chapter 3 respectively provide definitions of Hindu and Jain *dharma*, and Buddhist *Dharma*.

³Hindu ascetics who were members of the Brahmin, or priestly, caste. They were divided into many sects.

⁴Another group of ascetics. In the context of this edict,

Brahmanas and Sramanas means all Hindu and Buddhist holy people.

⁵The primitive, largely uncivilized folk of the southern jungle.

⁶About three thousand miles.

⁷Antiochus II Theos (r. 261–246 B.C.E.), a member of the Macedonian family of Seleucus and king of Syria.

four kings named Turamaya, Antikini, Maka, and Alikasudara,⁸ and to the south among the Cholas and Pandyas⁹ as far as Ceylon.¹⁰

Here in the King's dominion also, . . . everywhere people heed his instructions in Dharma.

Even in countries which King Priyadarsi's envoys have not reached, people have heard about Dharma and about his Majesty's ordinances and instructions in Dharma, and they themselves conform to Dharma and will continue to do so.

Wherever conquest is achieved by Dharma, it produces satisfaction. Satisfaction is firmly established by conquest by Dharma. Even satisfaction, however, is of little importance. King Priyadarsi attaches value ultimately only to consequences of action in the other world.

This edict on Dharma has been inscribed so that my sons and great-grandsons who may come after me should not think new conquests worth achieving. If they do conquer, let them take pleasure in moderation and mild punishments. Let them consider moral conquest the only true conquest.

This is good, here and hereafter. Let their pleasure be pleasure in morality. For this alone is good, here and hereafter.

PILLAR EDICT VII

King Priyadarsi, the Beloved of the Gods, speaks as follows: . . .

How can the people be induced to follow Dharma strictly? How can progress in morality be increased sufficiently? How can I raise them up by the promotion of Dharma? . . . This occurred to me. I shall issue proclamations on Dharma, and I shall order instruction in Dharma to be given to the people. Hearing these proclamations and instructions, the people will con-

form to Dharma; they will raise themselves up and will make progress by the promotion of Dharma. To this end I have issued proclamations on Dharma, and I have instituted various kinds of moral and religious instruction.

My highest officials, who have authority over large numbers of people, will expound and spread the precepts of Dharma. I have instructed the provincial governors, too, who are in charge of many hundred thousand people, concerning how to guide people devoted to Dharma. . . .

My officers charged with the spread of Dharma are occupied with various kinds of services beneficial to ascetics and householders, and they are empowered to concern themselves with all sects. I have ordered some of them to look after the affairs of the Sangha,¹¹ some to take care of the brahmin . . . ascetics, some to work among the Nirgranthas,¹² and some among the various other religious sects. Different officials are thus assigned specifically to the affairs of different religions, but my officers for spreading Dharma are occupied with all sects. . . .

These and many other high officials take care of the distribution of gifts from myself as well as from the queens. They report in various ways . . . worthy recipients of charity. . . . I also ordered some of them to supervise the distribution of gifts from my sons and the sons of other queens, in order to promote noble deeds of Dharma and conformity to the precepts of Dharma. These noble deeds and this conformity consist in promoting compassion, liberality, truthfulness, purity, gentleness, and goodness. . . .

Whatever good deeds I have done the people have imitated, and they have followed them as a model. In doing so, they have progressed and will progress in obedience to parents and teachers, in respect for elders, in courtesy to priests

⁸Ptolemy II Philadelphus of Egypt (r. 285–247 B.C.E.); Antigonos Gonatas of Macedonia (r. 278–239 B.C.E.); Magos of Cyrene in North Africa (r. 300–258 B.C.E.); and Alexander of Epirus in northwest Greece (r. ca. 272–258 B.C.E.).

⁹People of the southern tip of India.

¹⁰The major island off the southeast coast of India; today it is the nation of Sri Lanka.

¹¹Buddhist monastic groups.

¹²Jain ascetics (see Chapter 3, source 18).

and ascetics, to the poor and distressed, and even to slaves and servants. . . .

The people can be induced to advance in Dharma by only two means, by moral prescriptions and by meditation. Of the two, moral prescriptions are of little consequence, but meditation is of great importance. The moral prescriptions I have promulgated include rules making certain animals inviolable,¹³ and many others. But even in the case of abstention from injuring and from killing living creatures, it is by meditation that people have progressed in Dharma most.

This edict on Dharma has been inscribed in order that it may endure and be followed as long as my sons and great-grandsons shall reign and as long as the sun and moon shall shine. For one who adheres to it will attain happiness in this world and hereafter. . . .

This edict on morality should be engraved wherever stone pillars or stone slabs are available, in order that it may endure forever.

PILLAR EDICT II

King Priyadarsi says:

Dharma is good. But what does Dharma consist of? It consists of few sins and many good deeds, of kindness, liberality, truthfulness, and purity.

I have bestowed even the gift of spiritual insight on men in various ways. I have decreed many kindnesses, including even the grant of life, to living creatures, two-footed and four-footed as well as birds and aquatic animals. I have also performed many other good deeds.

I have ordered this edict on Dharma to be inscribed in order that people may act according to it and that it may endure for a long time. And he who follows it completely will do good deeds.

ROCK EDICT IX

King Priyadarsi, the Beloved of the Gods, says:

People perform various ceremonies. Among the occasions on which ceremonies are performed are sicknesses, marriages of sons or daughters, children's births, and departures on journeys. Women in particular have recourse to many diverse, trivial, and meaningless ceremonies.

It is right that ceremonies be performed. But this kind bears little fruit. The ceremony of Dharma,¹⁴ on the contrary, is very fruitful. It consists in proper treatment of slaves and servants, reverence to teachers, restraint of violence toward living creatures, and liberality to priests and ascetics. These and like actions are called the ceremonies of Dharma.

Therefore, a father, son, brother, master, friend, acquaintance, or even neighbor ought to say about such actions, "These are good; they should be performed until their purpose is achieved. I shall observe them."

Other ceremonies are of doubtful value. They may achieve their purpose, or they may not. Moreover the purposes for which they are performed are limited to this world.

The ceremony of Dharma, on the other hand, is not limited to time. Even if it does not achieve its object in this world, it produces unlimited merit in the next world. But if it produces its object in this world, it achieves both effects: the purpose desired in this world and unlimited merit in the next.

It has also been said that liberality is commendable. But there is no greater liberality than the gift of Dharma or the benefit of Dharma. Therefore, a friend, well-wisher, relative, or companion should urge one when the occasion arises, saying, "You should do this; this is commendable. By doing this you may attain heaven."

¹³Certain animals are not to be harmed.

¹⁴*Ceremony* should be understood in a metaphorical sense — the good works of Dharma as encapsulated in the Holy Eightfold Path (Chapter 3, source 19).

And what is more worth doing than attaining heaven?

ROCK EDICT VII

King Priyadarsi wishes members of all faiths to live everywhere in his kingdom.

For they will seek mastery of the senses and purity of mind. Men are different in their inclinations and passions, however, and they may perform the whole of their duties or only part.

Even if one is not able to make lavish gifts, mastery of the senses, purity of mind, gratitude, and steadfast devotion are commendable and essential.

PILLAR EDICT IV

Impartiality is desirable in legal procedures and in punishments. I have therefore decreed that henceforth prisoners who have been convicted and sentenced to death shall be granted a respite of three days. During this period their relatives may appeal to the officials for the prisoners' lives; or, if no one makes an appeal, the prisoners may prepare for the other world by distributing gifts or by fasting.

For I desire that, when the period of respite has expired, they may attain happiness in the next world, and that various ways of practicing Dharma by self-control and the distribution of gifts may be increased among the people.

Sacred Law in Classical India



38 ▼ THE LAWS OF MANU

Despite Asoka's promotion of the Buddhist principle of Dharma, or the Law of Righteousness, the majority of India's population remained true to more traditional Hindu ways and beliefs, which included acceptance of the caste system and the notion that dharma defines caste duties, as Lord Krishna taught in the *Bhagavad Gita* (Chapter 3, source 17). For most Hindus, dharma became concrete in those innumerable rituals that Asoka found so useless and in Indian civilization's numerous forms of mandated social behavior. Faith, worship, and social duty all sprang from dharma.

The earliest extant codification of the Sacred Law of dharma is the *Laws of Manu*, which was compiled between the first century B.C.E. and the second or third century C.E. In Hindu mythology *Manu* was the primeval human being, the father of humanity, and its first king. In the Vedas he appears as the founder of all human social order and the original teacher of dharma, having been instructed in the Sacred Law by Brahman. Tradition also regarded him as an Indian Utnapishtim or Noah, the sole survivor of a catastrophic flood, after which he created a woman, through whom he generated the human species. The anonymous compilers of the *Laws of Manu* claimed that the rules and regulations contained in this code were universal and timeless. Each law was a manifestation of dharma, passed down uncorrupted from Brahman through Manu. In reality, this collection mirrors twenty-five hundred years of Indian social history and religious thought, and consequently contains what seem to the outside viewer to be numerous contradictions. These apparent discrepancies, however, are readily

integrated in a cultural complex predicated on the idea that spiritual truth has infinite manifestations.

The selections here illustrate the two major determinants of classical Indian society: caste and gender. As far as we can ascertain, class and gender distinctions of one sort or another were common to all ancient civilizations, but the caste system was unique to India. The English word *caste* derives from the Portuguese *casta*, which means “pure.” Hindus use two different Sanskrit words for caste: *varna* (color) and *jati* (birth). *Varna* refers only to the four major social-religious divisions that “The Hymn to Purusha” (Chapter 2, source 11) enumerates: *Brahmins* (priests); *Kshatriyas* (warriors); *Vaisyas* (farmers, artisans, and merchants); and *Sudras* (workers). These classifications of Indian society possibly resulted from the Aryans’ attempt to separate themselves from the darker-skinned natives whom they had conquered. The *jati* system, which today includes more than three thousand identifiable groupings, was not fully developed until around the Gupta period, long after the Aryans had disappeared into India’s general population. *Jatis* are hereditary occupations, each with its own *dharma*. Hindus generally classify *jatis* as subdivisions of the *varna* system and steps in the ladder of reincarnation.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. The lowest-ranking *jatis* are composed of people known as *untouchables*. Why are they called that, and what manner of life do they lead? What is there about their occupations that other Hindus find so offensive?
2. Under what circumstances might a person engage in work appropriate to a lower *varna*? How far may one go in this regard, and what are the consequences? May one legitimately assume the duties of a higher *varna*? Is intermarriage among the castes considered acceptable?
3. Each *varna* and *jati* has its own *dharma*. Is there, additionally, a universal *dharma* common to all Hindus?
4. How might the caste system make political and social unification difficult, if not impossible?
5. Why are women denied access to ceremonies where the vedic texts are recited? Notwithstanding this prohibition, do women perform any necessary religious functions? If so, what are they, and what do the functions suggest about the status of women?
6. What constraints are placed on women, and why? What freedoms, if any, does a woman enjoy? How and why, if at all, are women protected and honored? What are the duties of their fathers and husbands?
7. Compare the status of Hindu women with that of women in Han China (source 36). How do their respective situations reflect the different cultures in which they live? Notwithstanding cultural differences, are their positions comparable, or does one group seem to enjoy greater freedom and power? Is one better protected than the other?

VARNA

The Brahmin, the Kshatriya, and the Vaisya castes are the twice-born ones,¹ but the fourth, the Sudra, has one birth only; there is no fifth caste. . . .

To Brahmins he² assigned teaching and studying the Vedas, sacrificing for their own benefit and for others, giving and accepting of alms.

The Kshatriya he commanded to protect the people, to bestow gifts, to offer sacrifices, to study the Vedas, and to abstain from attaching himself to sensual pleasures;

The Vaisya to tend cattle, to bestow gifts, to offer sacrifices, to study the Vedas, to trade, to lend money, and to cultivate land.

One occupation only the lord prescribed to the Sudra, to serve meekly . . . these other three castes.

JATIS

From a male Sudra are born an Ayogava, a Kshattri, and a Kandala, the lowest of men, by Vaisya, Kshatriya, and Brahmin females respectively, sons who owe their origin to a confusion of the castes.³ . . .

Killing fish to Nishadas; carpenters' work to the Ayogava; to Medas, Andhras, Kunkus, and Madgus, the slaughter of wild animals. . . .

But the dwellings of Kandalas . . . shall be outside the village. . . .

Their dress shall be the garments of the dead, they shall eat their food from broken dishes, black iron shall be their ornaments, and they must always wander from place to place.

A man who fulfills a religious duty, shall not seek intercourse with them; their [Kandala] transactions shall be among themselves, and their marriages with their equals. . . .

At night they shall not walk about in villages and in towns.

By day they may go about for the purpose of their work, distinguished by marks at the king's command, and they shall carry out the corpses of persons who have no relatives; that is a settled rule.

By the king's order they shall always execute the criminals, in accordance with the law, and they shall take for themselves the clothes, the beds, and the ornaments of such criminals.

DHARMA

A king who knows the sacred law must inquire into the laws of castes [jatis], of districts, of guilds, and of families, and settle the peculiar law of each. . . .

Among the several occupations the most commendable are, teaching the Vedas for a Brahmin, protecting the people for a Kshatriya, and trade for a Vaisya.

But a Brahmin, unable to subsist by his peculiar occupations just mentioned, may live according to the law applicable to Kshatriyas; for the latter is next to him in rank. . . .

A man of low caste [varna] who through covetousness lives by the occupations of a higher one, the king shall deprive of his property and banish.

It is better to discharge one's own duty incompletely than to perform completely that of another; for he who lives according to the law of another caste is instantly excluded from his own.

A Vaisya who is unable to subsist by his own duties, may even maintain himself by a Sudra's mode of life, avoiding however acts forbidden to him, and he should give it up, when he is able to do so. . . .

¹One's second birth is initiation into the recitation of the Vedas. Only men can be *twice-born*.

²Brahman.

³This explains the existence of certain low-born, or unclean, jatis; they originated in mythic time as the result of illicit

unions between people of different castes. The greatest profanation of all was when a male Sudra defiled (had sexual intercourse with) a female Brahmin, and the consequence was the origin of the *Kandala* jati — the basest of all jatis.

Abstention from injuring creatures, veracity, abstention from unlawfully appropriating the goods of others, purity, and control of the organs,⁴ Manu has declared to be the summary of the law for the four castes.

THE NATURE OF WOMEN

It is the nature of women to seduce men in this world; for that reason the wise are never unguarded in the company of females. . . .

For women no rite is performed with sacred texts, thus the law is settled; women who are destitute of strength and destitute of the knowledge of Vedic texts are as impure as falsehood itself; that is a fixed rule.

HONORING WOMEN

Where women are honored, there the gods are pleased; but where they are not honored, no sacred rite yields rewards.

Where the female relations live in grief, the family soon wholly perishes; but that family where they are not unhappy ever prospers.

FEMALE PROPERTY RIGHTS

A wife, a son, and a slave, these three are declared to have no property; the wealth which they earn is acquired for him to whom they belong. . . .

What was given before the nuptial fire, what was given on the bridal procession, what was given in token of love, and what was received from her brother, mother, or father, that is called the six-fold property of a woman.

Such property, as well as a gift subsequent and what was given to her by her affectionate hus-

band, shall go to her offspring, even if she dies in the lifetime of her husband. . . .

But when the mother has died, all the uterine⁵ brothers and the uterine sisters shall equally divide the mother's estate.

A WOMAN'S DEPENDENCE

In childhood a female must be subject to her father, in youth to her husband, when her lord is dead to her sons; a woman must never be independent.

She must not seek to separate herself from her father, husband, or sons; by leaving them she would make both her own and her husband's families contemptible. . . .

Him to whom her father may give her, or her brother with the father's permission, she shall obey as long as he lives, and when he is dead, she must not insult his memory.

BETROTHAL

No father who knows the law must take even the smallest gratuity for his daughter; for a man who, through avarice, takes a gratuity, is a seller of his offspring. . . .

Three years let a damsel wait,⁶ though she be marriageable,⁷ but after that time let her choose for herself a bridegroom of equal caste and rank.

If, being not given in marriage, she herself seeks a husband, she incurs no guilt, nor does he whom she weds.

MARRIAGE AND ITS DUTIES

To be mothers were women created, and to be fathers men; religious rites, therefore, are ordained in the Vedas to be performed by the husband together with the wife. . . .

⁴Control of all the senses and especially one's sexual drives.

⁵All natural siblings (born from her uterus).

⁶To be offered in marriage by her father or brother.

⁷Twelve was a common age of marriage for women; men tended to wait until their twenties.

No sacrifice, no vow, no fast must be performed by women apart from their husbands; if a wife obeys her husband, she will for that reason alone be exalted in heaven.⁸ . . .

By violating her duty towards her husband, a wife is disgraced in this world, after death she enters the womb of a jackal, and is tormented by diseases as punishment for her sin. . . .

Let the husband employ his wife in the collection and expenditure of his wealth, in keeping everything clean, in the fulfilment of religious duties, in the preparation of his food, and in looking after the household utensils. . . .

Drinking spirituous liquor, associating with wicked people, separation from the husband, rambling abroad, sleeping at unseasonable hours, and dwelling in other men's houses, are the six causes of the ruin of women. . . .

Offspring, religious rites, faithful service, highest conjugal happiness and heavenly bliss for the ancestors and oneself, depend on one's wife alone. . . .

"Let mutual fidelity continue until death," . . . may be considered as the summary of the highest law for husband and wife.

⁸While waiting for the next incarnation on the karmic journey of release from the bonds of matter, a soul can be assigned to one of an infinite number of heavens or hells. Thus, depending on how well or poorly a person followed dharma, there was a double reward or punishment: a heaven or a hell followed by incarnation into a higher or lower caste or even a lower life form. Compare this with Virgil's ideas regarding the afterlife and reincarnation (source 33).

⁹He has so egregiously violated the dharma of his caste

Let man and woman, united in marriage, constantly exert themselves, that they may not be disunited and may not violate their mutual fidelity.

DIVORCE

For one year let a husband bear with a wife who hates him; but after a year let him deprive her of her property and cease to cohabit with her. . . .

But she who shows aversion towards a mad or outcaste⁹ husband, a eunuch,¹⁰ one destitute of manly strength, or one afflicted with such diseases as punish crimes,¹¹ shall neither be cast off nor be deprived of her property. . . .

A barren¹² wife may be superseded¹³ in the eighth year, she whose children all die in the tenth, she who bears only daughters in the eleventh, but she who is quarrelsome without delay.

But a sick wife who is kind to her husband and virtuous in her conduct, may be superseded only with her own consent and must never be disgraced.

(varna) that he has been made an *outcaste* — for example, a Brahmin who knowingly receives food or a gift from a Kandala or other unclean person.

¹⁰Sexually impotent.

¹¹A disease incurred by reason of a sin in a previous incarnation (the law of karma). Hindu society evolved complex and lengthy lists of diseases and their corresponding sins.

¹²Childless.

¹³Replaced as primary wife by a second wife.

Gupta India as Viewed by a Chinese Monk



39 ▼ Faxian, *TRAVELS IN INDIA AND CEYLON*

During the age of the Later Han Dynasty (25–220 C.E.), Buddhist missionaries traveled to China along the overland routes of Central Asia and the oceanic trade routes of Southeast Asia. As China underwent increasing stresses during the last stages of the Han Empire, a form of salvationist Buddhism known as the *Mahayana doctrine* became quite popular (Chapter 6, sources 44 and 45). In the post-Han

period of disunity it provided many Chinese with a comforting refuge from the evils of the world.

As Buddhism expanded in China, devotees of the new religion, particularly monks, avidly sought to add to the available body of Buddhist literature, which meant tracing down various Buddhist holy books, or *sutras*, in India and translating them into Chinese. The search for a complete and authentic library of Buddhist scripture, together with the desire to make pilgrimages to sites made sacred by the Buddha and his early disciples, resulted in a steady but small stream of Chinese travelers to India during the age of the Gupta Empire and thereafter.

The earliest known Chinese pilgrim to travel to India and return with sacred books was the monk *Faxian*. In 399 he set out from North China, traveling by a difficult overland route to India, where he visited sacred shrines, learned Sanskrit, and immersed himself in the legends and lore of Buddhism. From India he sailed to the island of Ceylon (modern Sri Lanka), which, according to one tradition, had received Buddhism through the efforts of Asoka and his missionary son, Mahendra. From there Faxian traveled to Java and in 414 reached home, where he spent the rest of his days translating the texts he had obtained in India.

In addition to these translations, Faxian left behind a record of his travels, in which he described Indian society in the reign of Chandragupta II. Although this pious Chinese monk was much more concerned with pilgrimage sites and holy books than with providing detailed descriptions of Indian culture, his travelogue is important because it provides an outsider's view of India at the height of Gupta prosperity. One thing that Faxian failed to note (but which the reader should be aware of) is that Hinduism in all its forms enjoyed a resurgence of vitality during the Gupta Era to the point that it was absorbing and displacing Indian Buddhism.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. According to Faxian, how strong was Buddhism in northern India in his day?
2. How well or poorly did the Hindu and Buddhist communities interact? What conclusion follows from your answer?
3. Consider the Buddha's refusal to deal with such questions as the existence of spirits, the soul, an afterlife, and gods (Chapter 3, source 19), and his rejection of all ritual. By Faxian's day, how had popular Buddhism merged with Indian folk beliefs and customs?
4. To what extent does Faxian's account of the life led by members of the Kandala jati agree with the evidence from the *Laws of Manu*? Be specific.
5. How did Buddhist principles seem to influence the various social practices and values of Gupta India?
6. How prosperous and well-governed do the land and its people appear to have been? Do they appear to have been intensively governed and restricted?
7. Play a bit of historical fantasy and compose Asoka's commentary on Gupta India.

From this place they¹ traveled southeast, passing by a succession of very many monasteries, with a multitude of monks,² who might be counted by myriads. After passing all these places, they came to a . . . river on the banks of which, left and right, there were twenty monasteries, which might contain three thousand monks; and here the Law of Buddha was still more flourishing. Everywhere, from the Sandy Desert, in all the countries of India, the kings had been firm believers in that Law. When they make their offerings to a community of monks, they take off their royal caps, and along with their relatives and ministers, supply them with food with their own hands. That done, the king has a carpet spread for himself on the ground, and sits down on it in front of the leader of the monastery; — they dare not presume to sit on couches in front of the community. The laws and ways, according to which the kings presented their offerings when Buddha was in the world, have been handed down to the present day.

All south from this is named the Middle Kingdom. In it the cold and heat are finely tempered, and there is neither hoarfrost nor snow. The people are numerous and happy; they have not to register their households, or attend to any magistrates and their rules; only those who cultivate the royal land have to pay a portion of the gain from it. If they want to go, they go; if they want to stay on, they stay. The king governs without decapitation or other corporal punishments. Criminals are simply fined, lightly or heavily, according to the circumstances of each case. Even in cases of repeated attempts at wicked rebellion, they only have their right hands cut off. The king's bodyguards and attendants all have salaries. Throughout the whole country the people do not kill any living creature, nor drink

intoxicating liquor, nor eat onions or garlic. The only exception is that of the Kandalas.³ That is the name for those who are held to be wicked men, and live apart from others. When they enter the gate of a city or a market-place, they strike a piece of wood to make themselves known, so that men know and avoid them, and do not come into contact with them. In that country they do not keep pigs and fowls, and do not sell live cattle; in the markets there are no butchers' shops and no dealers in intoxicating drink. . . . Only the Kandalas are fishermen and hunters, and sell flesh meat.

After Buddha attained to *pari-nirvana*⁴ the kings of the various countries and the heads of the Vaisyas⁵ built *viharas*⁶ for the monks, and endowed them with fields, houses, gardens, and orchards, along with the resident populations and their cattle, the grants being engraved on plates of metal, so that afterwards they were handed down from king to king, without any one daring to annul them, and they remain even to the present time.

The regular business of the monks is to perform acts of meritorious virtue, and to recite their *Sutras*⁷ and sit wrapt in meditation. When stranger monks arrive at any monastery, the old residents meet and receive them, carry for them their clothes and alms-bowl, give them water to wash their feet, oil with which to anoint them, and the liquid food permitted out of the regular hours.⁸ When the stranger has enjoyed a very brief rest, they further ask the number of years that he has been a monk, after which he receives a sleeping apartment with its appurtenances, according to his regular order, and everything is done for him which the rules prescribe.

Where a community of monks resides, they erect *stupas*⁹ to Sariputta, to Mahamaudgalya-

¹Faxian and his fellow pilgrims.

²Chapter 3, source 20.

³The lowest group of untouchables (see source 38).

⁴The Buddha's release from the bonds of matter — his final death.

⁵The caste of merchants and prosperous farmers (see source 38).

⁶A hermitage for a recluse or a little house built for a holy person.

⁷Sacred texts.

⁸Solid food was prohibited between sunrise and noon.

⁹A *stupa* was a large, domed structure built to house some relic of the Buddha or one of his early disciples. Asoka had commissioned the construction of many stupas throughout his empire, and they continued to be built and refined architecturally long after the collapse of the Mauryan Empire.

yana, and to Ananda,¹⁰ and also stupas in honor of the Abhidharma, the Vinaya, and the Suttas.¹¹ A month after the annual season of rest, the families which are looking out for blessing stimulate one another to make offerings to the monks, and send round to them the liquid food which may be taken out of the ordinary hours. All the monks come together in a great assembly, and preach the Law; after which offerings are presented at the stupa of Sariputta, with all kinds of flowers and incense. All through the night lamps are kept burning, and skillful musicians are employed to perform. . . .

Having crossed the river, and descended south . . . the travelers came to the town of Pataliputra,¹² in the kingdom of Magadha, the city where king Asoka ruled. . . .

By the side of the stupa of Asoka, there has been made a mahayana monastery, very grand and beautiful; there is also a hinayana¹³ one; the two together containing six hundred or seven hundred monks. The rules of demeanor and the scholastic arrangements in them are worthy of observation.

Shamans¹⁴ of the highest virtue from all quarters, and students, inquirers wishing to find out truth and the grounds of it, all resort to these monasteries. There also resides in this monastery a Brahmin teacher, whose name also is Manjusri, whom the shamans of greatest virtue in the kingdom, and the mahayana bhikshus¹⁵ honor and look up to.

The cities and towns of this country are the greatest of all in the Middle Kingdom. The inhabitants are rich and prosperous, and vie with one another in the practice of benevolence and righteousness. Every year on the eighth day of

the second month they celebrate a procession of images. They make a four-wheeled car, and on it erect a structure of five stories by means of bamboos tied together. This is supported by a king-post, with poles and lances slanting from it, and is rather more than twenty cubits high, having the shape of a stupa. White and silk-like cloth of hair is wrapped all round it, which is then painted in various colors. They make figures of devas¹⁶ with gold, silver, and lapis lazuli grandly blended and having silken streamers and canopies hung out over them. On the four sides are niches, with a Buddha seated in each, and a Bodhisattva¹⁷ standing in attendance on him. There may be twenty cars, all grand and imposing, but each one different from the others. On the day mentioned, the monks and laity within the borders all come together; they have singers and skillful musicians; they pay their devotions with flowers and incense. The Brahmins come and invite the Buddhas to enter the city. These do so in order, and remain two nights in it. All through the night they keep lamps burning, have skillful music, and present offerings. This is the practice in all the other kingdoms as well. The heads of the Vaisya families in them establish in the cities houses for dispensing charity and medicines. All the poor and destitute in the country, orphans, widowers, and childless men, maimed people and cripples, and all who are diseased, go to those houses, and are provided with every kind of help, and doctors examine their diseases. They get the food and medicines which their cases require, and are made to feel at ease; and when they are better, they go away of themselves.

¹⁰Three of the Buddha's principal disciples. Ananda appears in source 20 of Chapter 3.

¹¹The *Tipitaka*, or Three Baskets — the three major collections of Buddhist sacred literature. (See the introduction to source 19 of Chapter 3.)

¹²Modern Patna.

¹³The *Hinayana* (Small Vehicle), or, more correctly, *Theravada*, school was the second of Buddhism's two major sects at this time. Both it and the *Mahayana* (Great Vehicle) school are treated in Chapter 6.

¹⁴He probably means Hindu *yogis* (practitioners of the art of disciplining body and mind through the practice of *yoga*) and other holy persons. (Chapter 1, source 10 deals with shamanism.)

¹⁵Buddhist monks.

¹⁶Gods and goddesses.

¹⁷An enlightened being who voluntarily postpones Nirvana, or escape from this world, in order to work for the salvation of others. (See Chapter 6, sources 44 and 45.)

Long-Distance Travel and Exchange

At the beginning of the first millennium C.E., two major trade routes linked the First Afro-Eurasian Ecumene, making it possible for commodities and ideas to circulate from Southeast to Southwest Asia, from China to the Greco-Roman Mediterranean, from India to Africa.

A series of sea routes extended from China and the lands of Southeast Asia in the east and from the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf in the west to India, which served as a central meeting point for merchants from both directions. There, for example, Western merchants exchanged gold for pepper and other spices, jewels, and muslin cloth, as well as for Chinese manufactured commodities, such as porcelains, lacquered boxes, ironware, and silk. The Hellenistic geographer Strabo (ca. 64 B.C.E.–25 C.E.) claimed that in his day 120 vessels made the annual voyage from Egypt to India. There is even a record of a group of supposedly Roman merchants (probably Syrians or Egyptians) who sailed from India to south China in the mid second century C.E., but such adventures were rare. For most merchant mariners, India was the main terminus and marketplace where East met West.

The other route connecting the East with the West was the romantically named *Silk Road*, a series of linked camel caravan routes that ran for five thousand miles from China to the eastern shores of the Mediterranean. As the name implies, Chinese silk was the major commodity that stimulated trade along these roads. Because it was shorter, more direct, less costly, and safer, the Silk Road was the preferred route for long-distance exchange between China and the West. Yet, very few Mediterraneans traveled all the way to China, and fewer Chinese ventured even to the borders of the Roman Empire. Instead, a series of merchant intermediaries speeded along the silk, cotton, spices, plants and animals, manufactured goods, gold, ideas, and even killing diseases that traveled from one end of this great network to the other, with the *Parthian Empire* serving as a major site of exchange and interchange. Aware of the profits to be gained from its strategic location, Parthia, which was centered in Mesopotamia and Iran, provided security by policing the roads that ran through its territories, but it also discouraged all direct commercial traffic through its regions.

Although merchants from the Mediterranean traded some Western manufactured goods, such as colored glass vessels and bronze statues, for silk and other Eastern luxury items, their main form of payment was gold and silver, which meant that the Roman World suffered from a trade imbalance with the East. By the third century C.E. this trade imbalance contributed to the empire's overall economic miseries.

Rome's Asiatic trade introduced other even more damaging miseries, as well. From the mid second through the sixth centuries a series of new diseases, which appear to have traveled along the Silk Road from the east, devastated the Mediterranean. Each new disease, appearing as it did among an unprotected population, resulted in massive die-offs. The impact of the sudden deaths of tens of

millions of Mediterraneans during these four and one-half centuries significantly contributed to the eventual transformation of the Greco-Roman World.

Regardless of these tragic consequences, trade along the Silk Road continued, at times somewhat tenuously, after the empires of Rome and Han China had passed away. During the fifth and sixth centuries C.E. trade slowed to a trickle, but it revived dramatically during the age of China's Tang Dynasty (618–907). The riches that were available to the merchants willing to brave the hazards of this caravan network that linked eastern and western Eurasia were far too attractive to ignore.

The same was true for the sea routes through the waters of the Indian Ocean. Despite political and social vicissitudes, they never shut down. The pull of its currents and the push of its monsoon winds were too strong not to draw Africans, Arabs, Persians, Indians, Malays, and Chinese into this rich trading complex, despite its dangers.

Our first source sheds light on the hazards and conditions of sea travel through the waters of the Indian Ocean and South China Sea in the early fifth century C.E. Our second source, a collection of five sculptures, suggests that more than just gold and goods traveled in the caravans of the Silk Road.

Faxian's Homeward Voyage



40 ▼ Faxian, TRAVELS

During the last centuries B.C.E. Indian merchants, especially from India's southern kingdoms, began sailing across the Bay of Bengal into the lands of Southeast Asia, which were rich in natural resources, such as gold, spices, and the aromatic woods and resins of the rain forests. The result was the creation, during the first several centuries C.E., of a network of routes and overseas trading stations tying India and the island of Ceylon to the peoples of coastal Southeast Asia. Traffic flowed in both directions, as Southeast Asians made their way to India for trade and study, and Malay sailors even ventured as far as the east coast of Africa.

One significant consequence of this contact was the exportation of Indian culture, especially Hindu and Buddhist religious beliefs and practices, into a number of Southeast Asian lands during the first five centuries C.E. India was not, however, the only neighbor to leave a permanent imprint on Southeast Asia. China imparted many of its cultural ways to the northern regions of mainland Southeast Asia, especially northern Vietnam, through both overland and seaborne contacts. Indeed, the ports of Southeast Asia, especially those that commanded the narrow Strait of Malacca separating the Malay Peninsula from the island of Sumatra, became prosperous way stations on an oceanic trade route that joined India with southern China.

The earliest known account of these sea routes was composed by the Chinese monk Faxian, whom we met in source 39. After spending two years on the island of Ceylon off the southern tip of India, where he obtained additional Buddhist sutras, Faxian prepared to travel by ship back to China. His plan was to reach the

southern Chinese port of Guangzhou (Canton), but when he finally set foot on Chinese soil in 414, he found himself far up the northeast coast in Shandong Province, which lies across the Yellow Sea from Korea. His adventures and misadventures on his homeward voyage shed light on the interesting nature of early fifth-century oceanic travel between India and China.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. What does Faxian tell us about the voyage to Java-dvipa and the ship in which he sailed?
2. What does he tell us about the last leg of his journey from Java-dvipa to China and the ship in which he sailed?
3. Based on your answers to questions 1 and 2, describe the state of travel between India and China in the early fifth century C.E.
4. What does this account allow us to infer about cultural interchanges in this region?

Faxian abode in this country¹ two years. . . . Having obtained these Sanskrit works,² he took passage in a large merchantman, on board of which there were more than 200 men, and to which was attached by a rope a smaller vessel, as a provision against damage or injury to the large one from the perils of the navigation. With a favorable wind, they proceeded eastwards for three days, and then they encountered a great wind. The vessel sprang a leak and the water came in. The merchants wished to go to the smaller vessel; but the men on board it, fearing that too many would come, cut the connecting rope. The merchants were greatly alarmed, feeling their risk of instant death. Afraid that the vessel would fill, they took their bulky goods and threw them into the water. Faxian also took his pitcher and washing-basin, with some other articles, and cast them into the sea; but fearing that the merchants would cast overboard his books and images, he could only think with all his heart of Guanshiyin,³ and commit his life to [the protection of] the Buddhist congregation

of the land of Han,⁴ [saying in effect], "I have travelled far in search of our Law. Let me, by your dread and supernatural [power], return from my wanderings, and reach my resting place!"

In this way the tempest continued day and night, till on the thirteenth day the ship was carried to the side of an island, where, on the ebbing of the tide, the place of the leak was discovered, and it was stopped, on which the voyage was resumed. On the sea [hereabouts] there are many pirates, to meet with whom is speedy death. The great ocean spreads out, a boundless expanse. There is no knowing east or west; only by observing the sun, moon, and stars was it possible to go forward. If the weather were dark and rainy, [the ship] went as she was carried by the wind, without any definite course. In the darkness of the night, only the great waves were to be seen, breaking on one another, and emitting a brightness like that of fire, with huge turtles and other monsters of the deep [all about]. The merchants were full of terror, not knowing where they were going. The sea was deep and

¹Ceylon (modern Sri Lanka).

²Four sutras to add to those he had collected in India.

³Literally, "Perceiver of the World's Sounds," or "One Who Hears the Cries of the World," this Bodhisattva is better

known as *Guanyin*. (See Chapter 6, sources 44 and 45, for fuller treatment of this Mahayana Buddhist intermediary.)

⁴The Han Dynasty had collapsed in 220 C.E., but the Chinese still referred to China as the "land of Han."

bottomless, and there was no place where they could drop anchor and stop. But when the sky became clear, they could tell east and west, and [the ship] again went forward in the right direction. If she had come on any hidden rock, there would have been no way of escape.

After proceeding in this way for rather more than ninety days, they arrived at a country called Java-dvipa,⁵ where various forms of error and Brahminism are flourishing, while Buddhism in it is not worth speaking of. After staying there for five months,⁶ [Faxian] again embarked in another large merchantman, which also had on board more than 200 men. They carried provisions for fifty days, and commenced the voyage on the sixteenth day of the fourth month.

Faxian kept his retreat on board the ship. They took a course to the north-east, intending to reach Guangzhou. After more than a month, when the night-drum sounded the second watch, they encountered a black wind and tempestuous rain, which threw the merchants and passengers into consternation. Faxian again with all his heart directed his thoughts to Guanshiyin and the monkish communities of the land of Han; and, through their awesome and mysterious protection, was preserved to day-break. After day-break, the Brahmins⁷ deliberated together and said, "It is having this Sramana⁸ on board that has occasioned our misfortune and brought us this great and bitter suffering. Let us land the bhikshu⁹ and place him on some island-shore. We must not for the sake of one man allow our-

selves to be exposed to such imminent peril." A patron of Faxian, however, said to them, "If you land the bhikshu, you must at the same time land me; and if you do not, then you must kill me. If you land this Sramana, when I get to the land of Han, I will go to the emperor, and inform against you. The emperor also reveres and believes the Law of Buddha, and honors the bhikshus." The merchants hereupon were perplexed, and did not dare immediately to land Faxian.

At this time the sky continued very dark and gloomy, and the sailing-masters looked at one another and made mistakes. More than seventy days passed [from their leaving Java], and the provisions and water were nearly exhausted. They used the salt-water of the sea for cooking, and carefully divided the [fresh] water, each man getting two pints. Soon the whole was nearly gone, and the merchants took counsel and said, "At the ordinary rate of sailing we ought to have reached Guangzhou, and now the time is passed by many days; — must we not have held a wrong course?" Immediately they directed the ship to the north-west, looking out for land; and after sailing day and night for twelve days, they reached the shore on the south of mount Lao,¹⁰ . . . and immediately got good water and vegetables. They had passed through many perils and hardships, and had been in a state of anxious apprehension for many days together; and now suddenly arriving at this shore, . . . they knew indeed that it was the land of Han.

⁵Probably the western part of the island of Java, which lies just east of Sumatra.

⁶Probably waiting for favorable trade winds.

⁷He might mean all Hindus on board, not just members of the Brahmin caste.

⁸A Buddhist monk.

⁹Another term for a Buddhist monk.

¹⁰On the Shandong Peninsula.

The Transit of Images along Trade Routes



41 ▼ FIVE ROBED STATUES

The most visible manifestation of the First Age of Afro-Eurasian Interchange was the manner in which artistic motifs and styles traveled across the four major cultural pools, especially from west to east. As these ideas and forms moved from one region to another, they were reshaped and blended with native elements to produce striking examples of syncretic art. The first four sculptures that appear here illustrate the way in which a Greco-Roman artistic style traveled along the Silk Road from the Mediterranean to China. The fifth sculpture suggests how a northwest Indian art style, itself deeply influenced by Hellenistic models, traveled across the Indian Ocean to Southeast Asia.

As is evident in source 32, Hellenistic sculptors were masters at carving expressive faces and draped clothing in order to imbue each sculpted individual with a sense of personality and drama. They also used, to the point of making it a cliché, *contrapposto* to impart a sense of dynamism to their works. Our first statue portrays *Vibia Sabina*, the wife of the Roman emperor Hadrian. Created in 136 C.E., this statue presents the empress as a paragon of Roman feminine virtues. Her face, drapery, and even gentle turning of her foot evoke images of modesty, simplicity, dignity, and sobriety — all elements of the Roman self-image.

This particular statue was probably not seen outside of Italy, but its style was universal throughout the Greco-Roman World, and many examples of the style were exported beyond the boundaries of the Roman Empire, especially to Rome's immediate neighbor to the east — Parthia.

Our second sculpture — a woman in Southwest Asian dress (compare her clothing with that of Aththaia in source 34) — comes from Parthia and dates from the late second or early third century C.E. The work, which illustrates a typical Parthian blend of Greco-Roman and Southwest Asian components, is one of over one hundred similar votive statues discovered at the many shrines of the city of Hatra in northern Mesopotamia. The unknown noblewoman it portrays offered it in devotion to an equally unknown deity. The statue, which is more than six feet high, affirms the importance of the donor, who stands with her hand raised in reverence.

Our third statue portrays the Buddha. Early Buddhists believed it was wrong to depict the Buddha artistically in human form because he had broken the chains of matter and had achieved Nirvana. For over five hundred years Buddhist artists used such symbols as a wheel, a pipal tree (Chapter 1, source 8), a throne, a footprint, or a stupa (source 39, note 9) to symbolize his last earthly body. Toward the end of the first century C.E., artists in the Kushana province of *Gandhara*, which today comprises Afghanistan and northwest Pakistan, began representing the Buddha as a human. The sculpture of the standing Buddha that appears here is typical of the many carvings that have survived from this period and place. The setting is the Buddha's first sermon on the Law of Righteousness. Many of the features are distinctively Buddhist. The knot on the top of the Buddha's head is known as the *ushnisha* and represents his cosmic consciousness, and it probably

has no connection whatsoever with the stylish twist worn by Vibia Sabina. His pierced, distended earlobes symbolize his former royal life; the garment he wears is the *sanghati*, or monk's robe; the *halo*, or solar disk, that frames his head is typical of all Gandharan statues of the Buddha and represents his sanctity. His missing right hand probably was raised palm outward in the gesture of blessing. The lotuses, or water lilies, carved into the base of the statue are a Buddhist symbol of purity and peace, therefore Nirvana. But those lotuses are also an example of the syncretic nature of Buddhist art. The lotus first appeared in ancient Egyptian art as a symbol of rebirth, and it made its way to Gandhara and India through Mesopotamia and Iran. Therefore, it should not surprise us that many scholars claim that the style and majesty of the Greco-Roman imperial sculpture that emanated from the workshops of the Mediterranean deeply influenced the creators of the early Gandharan statues of the Buddha.

Our fourth sculpture depicts the Buddha standing on a lotus flower. Composed of gilded bronze, it was crafted in 477 in the region of China ruled by the Northern Wei Dynasty (386–535). The Northern Wei, Turkic invaders who had conquered and unified northern China during China's long period of political disunity following the collapse of the Han Empire, had adopted the trappings of Chinese aristocratic culture but added a new element. They were deeply devoted to Mahayana Buddhism and patronized its rapid spread throughout northern China. The statue, missing only its original, attached halo, deals largely with the same theme and setting as the Gandharan Buddha, but artistically it is somewhat different. An excellent example of an emerging Chinese style of Buddhist art, the statue's face and spiraling hair style, as well as its formality, are distinctly Chinese. However, the sensuousness of the statue in which a well-formed body is revealed beneath diaphanous robes is quite new to Chinese art and probably an import from India.

Our fifth sculpture is a Buddha statue that was excavated in the remains of the Southeast Asian harbor of Oc Eo, a port city in the ancient kingdom of Funan. During the third century C.E. the kingdom of Funan, established by emigrant Hindus in an area that encompassed portions of modern Vietnam and Cambodia, was already deeply Indianized — at least as far as the culture of its rulers was concerned. The power and wealth of this kingdom attracted not only Indians and Chinese (the latter gave the region its name) but even sailors from the Sassanid Empire of Persia, which had replaced the Parthian Empire early in the third century. By the sixth century, however, due to successful competition from more southerly port areas, Funan's economic and political power was rapidly contracting.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. Compare the first two sculptures. What moods are their respective artists trying to evoke?
2. Do you perceive any apparent Greco-Roman influences on the statue of the Parthian noblewoman? If so, what are they? How, if at all, have those influences been modified?

3. Consider the expressions, postures, and dress of the Gandharan and Chinese Buddhas. What responses do their respective sculptors hope to evoke from viewers?
4. Continue your comparative analysis of statues 3 and 4. In what ways are they similar? How do they differ? Which are more significant, the similarities or the differences? What do you conclude from your answer?



1
Vibia Sabina



Parthian Noblewoman

5. Now compare statues 1 through 4. Do they share any common elements? Do any significant differences divide them? What conclusions follow from your answers?
6. Compare the Funan Buddha with the Gandharan Buddha. Do you see why scholars conclude that this was probably a local copy of a Gandharan original? Explain your answer.



3

Gandharan Buddha



4

Northern Wei Buddha



5

Funan Buddha

Part Two

Faith, Devotion, and Salvation: Great World Religions to 1500

By about 200 B.C.E. two overarching religious traditions had taken shape in Eurasia. Indian civilization produced a wide variety of cults and religions, most important of which were Buddhism and Brahminical Hinduism. Despite their differences, all of India's homegrown religions denied the reality of this world and sought release from it. And in Southwest Asia two faiths emerged — Judaism and Zoroastrianism — each of which focused on a single God of righteousness, whose believers saw themselves as agents in the transformation of this world according to precepts decreed by their God.

During the next fifteen hundred years these four religions underwent significant changes. Zoroastrianism essentially disappeared after the ninth century C.E., except for remnant communities in Iran, India, Central Asia, and China. Before it passed away as a major religion, however, Zoroastrianism had a profound impact on the teachings of several new faiths: Christianity, *Manichaeism*, and *Islam*. Judaism, which also exhibited some Zoroastrian influences, survived, continued its historical evolution, and served as a major source for two new religions: Christianity and Islam. Meanwhile, one school of Buddhist thought, the *Mahayana* sect, evolved into a faith that offered its believers personal salvation. Mainstream Brahminical Hinduism never developed such a clearly articulated doctrine of heavenly salvation as it is understood in the religious traditions of Christianity and Islam, but it did evolve a form of worship centered on an intensely personal and deeply emotional devotion to a single, select deity.

Four faiths — Buddhism (largely in its Mahayana form), Christianity, Manichaeism, and Islam — became universal religions. That is, they found homes in a wide variety of cultural settings and claimed to offer salvation to all humanity. Of the four, Buddhism was the most regional, confined largely to the vast, heavily populated lands of South and East Asia. Islam became the most global, at least until around 1500. Islamic communities dominated the east coast of Africa and the trading empires of interior West Africa. Islam stretched across the entire breadth of North Africa, Southwest Asia, and the northern and central portions of India. It spread through much of Central Asia, the island and coastal regions of Southeast Asia, and touched many parts

of China. It even penetrated Europe. Islamic rulers controlled much of the Iberian Peninsula from the early eighth to the early thirteenth century, and it was not until 1492 that Christian powers were able to conquer the final Islamic state in Spain. Meanwhile, during the fourteenth century Islam arrived in Europe's Balkan region, where it has remained a vital force down to today. Christianity in its various forms found homes in Ethiopia, in the lands that bordered the eastern rim of the Mediterranean, among the Slavs of Eastern and Central Europe, and throughout Western Europe. In addition, small groups of Christians inhabited portions of Central Asia, northern and western China, and the western shores of India. With the new age of European transoceanic explorations, which got underway in the fifteenth century, Westerners transplanted Christianity throughout the Americas, along the Atlantic and Indian Ocean coasts of Africa, and, in a limited way, in various parts of East and South Asia. Manichaeism, which had its origins in third-century Babylonia, penetrated both the Roman and Chinese empires but was never more than a minority movement in either area. Persecutions led to its ultimate disappearance in Southwest Asia and the Roman World, but it remained a vital force in Central Asia for a millennium more.

Meanwhile, Judaism and Hinduism also expanded beyond the confines of their ethnic and geographic origins. In addition to the *Diaspora*, or Great Dispersion, of Jewish communities throughout much of Eurasia and northern Africa, Jews also welcomed *gentile* converts into their midst. The most notable example of conversion to Judaism was when the ruling families of the *Khazars*, a Turkic people inhabiting the upper Volga region between the Black and Caspian seas, embraced Judaism toward the middle of the eighth century, possibly under the influence of Jewish refugees from Persia. Yet conversions of this sort were rare in Jewish history, and generally Jews did not attempt to spread their religion beyond their ethnic boundaries. Indian merchants and Brahmin teachers were more active disseminators of culture and religion than their Jewish counterparts. As we saw in Chapter 5, Indians traveled in significant numbers across the waters of the Bay of Bengal bringing Hindu culture, particularly that of southern India, to the coastal regions of Southeast Asia. The cults of *Shiva* and *Vishnu* were welcomed and patronized by local rulers in these lands across the sea, but in the process the cults were modified to fit their new host cultures. Despite this expansion, however, both Judaism and Hinduism remained far less universal in scope or appeal than Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam, and maybe even Manichaeism.

Chapter 6

New Developments in Three Ancient Religions

During the first age of Afro-Eurasian interchange, Hinduism, Judaism, and Buddhism all experienced profound changes. Within Hinduism a new movement known as *bhakti*, or the Way of Devotion, challenged the caste system without rejecting it. At the same time, it was this new form of Hindu religion, not the caste system, that Indian merchants transplanted among the emerging civilizations of Southeast Asia in the early centuries C.E. Without the Way of Devotion, Hinduism probably would not have spread significantly beyond the Indian subcontinent.

Hinduism and Judaism have historically been family religions in the sense that each has been largely confined to the heirs of a single civilization. Normally, their adherents are born into these religious-social complexes and are not converts. At the same time, both religions have occasionally reached out beyond their cultural matrices. This was particularly so in the case of Judaism because of the *Diaspora*, or Great Dispersion, which scattered Jewish communities over much of the civilized Afro-Eurasian World. While Jews remained conscious of being a people apart from their *gentile*, or non-Jewish, neighbors, Jewish communities could not avoid cultural interchange with the societies within which they were settled.

Cultural exchange also contributed significantly to the development of a new form of Buddhist belief and devotion — the *Mahayana* sect. This school moved radically away from the Buddha's original teachings, which refused to consider such notions as personal immortality, by offering the promise of personal salvation. The message attracted many people suffering from the chaos of the breakdown of the first Afro-Eurasian Ecumene. Toward the middle of the first century B.C.E., Mahayana Buddhist ideas began to enter China, and in

the centuries that followed Buddhism in its many different forms swept through East Asia.

Hinduism: The Way of Devotion

In one of the *Bhagavad Gita*'s most famous scenes (which does not appear in the excerpt quoted in Chapter 3, source 17), Krishna, an incarnation of the god Vishnu, teaches Arjuna that *bhakti*, or unconditional devotion to a god, is one of several *yogas* (paths of selfless, god-focused action) by which a person can win release from the cycle of rebirth. Such a path to liberation appealed to many low-caste and casteless persons (as well as many women), who found strict and selfless conformity to the laws of dharma (the Yoga of Action) unattractive. It also appealed to persons who lacked the temperament or leisure to attain release from the shackles of matter through asceticism, study of the sacred scriptures, and meditation (the Yoga of Knowledge). The Yoga of Devotion, in which one passionately adored a savior god, offered a promise of immediate liberation to everyone.

In the Gupta Age (320–ca. 550) and thereafter there was an increasing tendency among many Hindus to reduce the myriad divine personifications of Brahman, the One, to three: *Brahma* the Creator, *Vishnu* the Preserver, and *Shiva* the Destroyer. Of this trinity, Brahma (not to be confused with Brahman) was the least widely worshiped because he was perceived as a remote kingly god who, after completing the process of creation, had retired from concerning himself with worldly affairs. Hindus widely adored Vishnu and Shiva, however, and they became two of the great gods of Asia. The cult of Shiva was especially popular in Southeast Asia, where he merged with several local native deities and was even adopted by some Buddhist sects.

Hindus who concentrated their worship on Vishnu or Shiva did not deny the existence of the many other divine and semidivine personalities who were part of the traditional pantheon of India. They simply chose Shiva or Vishnu as gods of special devotion because each, in his way, was a loving personification of the totality of Divine Reality. Vishnu's worshipers, for example, believed that he had selflessly blessed and taught humanity on a number of critical occasions in descents (*avatars*) from Heaven. On each occasion he took on either human or animal form and intervened on behalf of the forces of goodness to redress the equilibrium between good and evil. In fact, Vishnu's worshipers regarded the Buddha as one of Vishnu's nine chief avatars. Of all his various incarnations, however, the warriors Krishna and Rama enjoyed the widest devotional popularity. As Lord Krishna exemplified in the *Bhagavad Gita*, Vishnu's emergence into this world provided humanity with a model of divine perfection. By offering such a god exclusive and unqualified devotion, a worshiper hoped to share in that perfection.

This religious development of *bhakti*, which met so many of the needs of members of India's lower castes and social levels, helped Hinduism to counter

successfully the challenge of Buddhism, especially that of the Mahayana school. It is no simple coincidence that the Gupta Age was a period of Hindu Renaissance during which Hinduism gained considerable ground against Buddhism. Indeed, by 1500 Buddhism, as a religion with an identity separate from Hinduism, had largely disappeared from the land of its origin.

Vishnu, Destroyer of Sin



42 ▼ THE VISHNU PURANA

Between approximately 300 and 1000 a new sacred literature known as the *Puranas* (stories of ancient times) developed to give voice to bhakti. Composed by anonymous authors for popular consumption, each of the eighteen major Puranas is a long, rambling collection of myth and folklore that brings home to its largely unsophisticated audience the central message that a particular god — Brahma, Vishnu, or Shiva — deserves worship without reservation. The following selection comes from the closing lines of the *Vishnu Purana*.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. What power does the very name of Vishnu have?
2. What traditional avenues to liberation are referred to in this passage, and how does worship of Vishnu allow one to bypass or transcend them?
3. How does Vishnu, of and by himself, encompass all the powers of the Hindu trinity? How is he equated with Brahman, the World Soul?
4. How, if at all, does the theological message of this Purana represent a departure from the spirit that pervades *The Laws of Manu* (Chapter 5, source 38)?

I have related to you this Purana, which is equal to the Vedas¹ in sanctity, and by hearing which all faults and sins whatever are expiated. . . .

By hearing this, all sins are at once obliterated. In this also the glorious Hari² has been revealed, the cause of the creation, preservation, and destruction of the world; the soul of all things, and himself all things: by the repetition

of whose name man is undoubtedly liberated from all sins, which fly like wolves that are frightened by a lion. The repetition of his name with devout faith is the best remover of all sins, destroying them as fire purifies the metal from the dross. The stain of the Kali age,³ which ensures to men sharp punishments in hell,⁴ is at once effaced by a single invocation of Hari. He who is

¹Chapter 2, source 11.

²Another name for Vishnu.

³The *Kali Age* receives its name from Kali, goddess of destruction and consort of Shiva (source 43). The period comprises 360,000 years of evil and is the last of an eternal cycle of four repetitive ages. Following dissolution of the Kali Age, a period of new birth and virtue commences because the universe, although periodically destroyed by Shiva,

is eternal. The authors of the Puranas assumed they were living in a Kali Age.

⁴There are many hells (one Purana enumerates twenty-one) where the servants of Yama, god of death, punish persons for their social sins, especially sins against caste restrictions. This punishment is not eternal; eventually each soul is re-born into a lower caste or lower life form, depending on the weight of one's karma.

all that is, the whole egg of Brahma⁵ . . . he who is all things, who knows all things, who is the form of all things, being without form himself, and of whom whatever is, from mount Meru⁶ to an atom, all consists — he, the glorious Vishnu, the destroyer of all sin — is described in this Purana. By hearing this Purana an equal recompense is obtained to that which is derived from the performance of an Asvamedha sacrifice,⁷ or from fasting at the holy places. . . . This Purana is the best of all preservatives for those who are afraid of worldly existence, a certain alleviation of the sufferings of men, and remover of all imperfections. . . . Whoever hears this great mystery, which removes the contamination of the Kali, shall be freed from all his sins. He who hears this every day acquits himself of his daily obligations to ancestors, gods and men. . . . What marvel therefore is it that the sins of one who repeats the name of Achyuta⁸ should be wiped away? Should not that Hari be heard of, whom those devoted to acts⁹ worship with sacrifices continually as the god of sacrifice; whom those devoted to meditation¹⁰ contemplate . . . , who, as the gods, accepts the offerings addressed to them; the glorious being who is without beginning or end; . . . who is the abode of all spiritual power; in whom the limits of finite things cannot be measured;

and who, when he enters the ear, destroys all sin?

I adore him, that first of gods, Purushottama,¹¹ who is without end and without beginning, without growth, without decay, without death; who is substance that knows not change. I adore that ever inexhaustible spirit, who assumed sensible qualities;¹² who, though one, became many; who, though pure, became as if impure, by appearing in many and various shapes; who is endowed with divine wisdom, and is the author of the preservation of all creatures. I adore him, who is the one conjoined essence and object of both meditative wisdom and active virtue; who is watchful in providing for human enjoyments; who is one with the three qualities;¹³ who, without undergoing change, is the cause of the evolution of the world; who exists of his own essence, ever exempt from decay. I constantly adore him, who is entitled heaven, air, fire, water, earth, and ether; who is the bestower of all the objects which give gratification to the senses; who benefits mankind with the instruments of fruition; who is perceptible, who is subtle, who is imperceptible. May that unborn, eternal Hari, whose form is manifold, and whose essence is composed of both nature and spirit, bestow upon all mankind that blessed state which knows neither birth nor decay!

⁵All creation.

⁶The central mountain of the Earth and the home of the gods.

⁷A horse sacrifice, which was a carry-over from Aryan times.

⁸*The Unfallen One*, another of Vishnu's titles.

⁹Those who seek *moksha* (release) through the Yoga of Action.

¹⁰Those who seek release through the Yoga of Knowledge.

¹¹Another name for Vishnu — the sacrificial substance from which the world was created (see "The Hymn to Purusha," Chapter 2, source 11).

¹²Who had many incarnations, or avatars, such as Krishna.

¹³Creation, preservation, destruction.

Shiva, Auspicious Destroyer



43 ▼ SHIVA NATARAJA

Many people, especially those whose religions spring from the Southwest Asian tradition of ethical monotheism, might find it hard to accept the notion that a god whose primary function is destruction and death is regarded as a loving deity.

Yet *Shiva*, the name of the Hindu god of destruction, means “auspicious.” Indeed, contradiction is central to the cult of Shiva. He is celebrated as the divine patron of holy persons and is often portrayed as *Mahayogi* (the Great Ascetic) — deep in meditation, with matted hair and covered with ashes, all of which are signs of those who have renounced the pleasures of the world. At the same time, he is celebrated as a deity with an insatiable sexual appetite and is often portrayed as a sensuous lover.

The artifact illustrated here is a bronze statue of *Shiva Nataraja* (Lord of the Dance) from the Chola kingdom of southern India (ca. 850–1250), an area of fervent devotion to Shiva. The statue represents the god engaged in an ecstatic cosmic dance by which he brings to an end one of the cosmos’s cycles of time and ushers in a new era. The statue’s symbols offer numerous clues to how his worshipers perceive Shiva. Here he is dancing within a circle of fire, but his face presents a countenance of absolute equanimity. His hair is piled up in a crownlike style; flowing from the sides of his head are strands of hair intertwined with flowers and forming the shape of wings. His upper-left hand holds a devouring flame; his upper-right hand clasps a drum for beating out the endless rhythm of the universe, for he is also Lord of Time. The lower-right arm is entwined by a cobra, but the hand is raised in the silent “fear not” gesture. (Compare this with the Buddha’s right hand in Chapter 5, source 41.) The lower-left hand points to his raised left foot as a sign of release from the bonds of the material world. The other foot is planted firmly on the writhing body of *Apasamara*, the demon of ignorance and heedlessness.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. What double function does fire serve, especially in an agricultural society?
2. Keeping in mind your answer to question 1 and also the fact that Shiva uses a drum to beat out the rhythm of the universe, what do you think the circle of fire and the flame in his left hand represent?
3. If fire presents a double message, what other symbols in this statue give a similar double message? Consider particularly Shiva’s body language.
4. Consider Shiva’s hair. According to one tradition, the sacred River Ganges, the Mother of India and the source of all life, flows from Shiva’s head. What do this tradition and the manner in which the god’s hair is represented suggest about this deity?
5. Why do you think the artist has depicted Shiva with four arms instead of the standard two?
6. We saw in source 42 that Vishnu’s devotees believe that their savior god exercises all of the primary functions of the Godhead — creation, destruction, regeneration, preservation, and release. Can you find the appropriate symbols in this statue that illustrate a similar belief on the part of Shiva’s followers?
7. Consider the demon of ignorance. How would an ignorant person regard death? What do you think Shiva’s triumph over this demon represents?



Shiva Nataraja

Mahayana Buddhism: A Religion of Infinite Compassion

Asoka's Buddhism was idealistic, but it was also practical. He endeavored to make the Law of Righteousness a living reality for his people. Withdrawal from the world to live the life of a mendicant monk who sought Nirvana through meditation was not for Asoka. While he revered and patronized Buddhist monks, he chose to practice social activism based on his understanding of Buddhist principles. Moreover, by sending missionaries to neighboring and distant regions he affirmed his belief in Buddhism's universality. As his edicts indicate, unlike the Buddha, Asoka also did not consider the gods or a heavenly hereafter to be irrelevant concerns.

All of the qualities of Asoka's Buddhism became more pronounced in the generations that followed. Eventually they contributed to the emergence of a new interpretation of Buddhism known as *Mahayana*, or the Great Vehicle. The title is metaphorical: Mahayana sectarians picture their form of Buddhism as a great ferry that, under the guidance of enlightened pilots known as *Bodhisattvas*, carries all of humanity simultaneously across the river of life to salvation on the opposite shore.

Conversely, Mahayanists term the older, more traditional form of Buddhism *Hinayana*, or the Small Vehicle. The image is of a one-person raft because Hinayana Buddhism centers on the single *arabat*, or perfected disciple, who individually attains Enlightenment and Nirvana through solitary meditation, normally within a monastic setting. Followers of this form of Buddhism — which today predominates in the island nation of Sri Lanka and several countries of mainland Southeast Asia, especially Burma and Thailand — generally dislike the term *Hinayana*, because it implies inferiority, and call their sect *Theravada* (the Teaching of the Elders).

Evidence indicates that Mahayana Buddhism emerged in northwest India during the first or second century of the Common Era and probably did so in part as a result of certain Southwest Asian influences, primarily the notion of savior deities. According to Mahayana belief, Siddhartha Gautama the Buddha was not unique. There have been many Buddhas who lived before and after Gautama and who now preside over countless heavens that serve as way stations to Nirvana. Additionally, there are an infinite number of Bodhisattvas. The title *Bodhisattva* means "an enlightened being." Although they have attained Enlightenment, these compassionate perfected beings delay Nirvana in order to lead all humanity to salvation, drawing upon the countless merits they have accumulated in their perfect lives of selflessness to achieve this task. Those whom they save become, in turn, Bodhisattvas, who then delay their entry into Nirvana in order to help others. Through this pyramid of selfless compassion, ultimately all humanity will cross together into Nirvana, a state of perfect bliss. This comforting, nonexclusive

doctrine was destined to become the basis of a world religion, and during the first millennium of the Common Era it spread throughout most of East Asia.

Perceiver of the World's Sounds: A Universal Bodhisattva



44 ▼ *THE LOTUS SUTRA*

When faced with disaster on the high seas, the Chinese pilgrim-monk Faxian sought the protection of *Guanshiyin*. Better known as *Guanyin*, this Bodhisattva was the Chinese version of *Avalokitesvara*, whose name means “Perceiver of the World’s Sounds,” those sounds being both cries and prayers. Avalokitesvara makes his initial appearance in one of the most influential and beloved of all the sacred texts of the Mahayana doctrine, *The Lotus Sutra*. We do not know when or where the book was composed or in what Indian or Central Asian language the now-lost original appeared; we do know that its first Chinese translation was made in 255 C.E. A later translation of 406, however, became the standard version in which it was read throughout China and in areas within the Chinese cultural orbit. Our excerpt comes from that fifth-century Chinese text.

The lotus, or water lily, is one of the most common Buddhist symbols of Nirvana, chosen because this flower, rooted in mud, rises through stagnant water to free itself in purity and beauty. In a similar manner, *The Lotus Sutra* describes the ten cosmic levels of existence from Hell to Nirvana. On the ninth level, just below the state of Buddhahood, dwell the Bodhisattvas, who serve to alleviate the sufferings of others and to ferry them to Nirvana. Among them is Perceiver of the World’s Sounds.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. What does one do to attain this Bodhisattva’s help?
2. How will this Bodhisattva assist his devotees?
3. What conclusions do you draw from your answers regarding the message of Mahayana Buddhism and its appeal?
4. Compare this doctrine with bhakti. Which strike you as more significant, the differences or the similarities, and what conclusions follow from your answer?
5. Compare this document with Faxian’s account of Gupta India (Chapter 5, source 39). In what ways do they both present evidence of the relationship that existed between Brahminical Hinduism and Mahayana Buddhism? What was that relationship, and what inferences do you draw from your answer?

At that time the Bodhisattva Inexhaustible Intent immediately rose from his seat, bared his right shoulder, pressed his palms together and, facing the Buddha, spoke these words: "World-Honored One, this Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds — why is he called Perceiver of the World's Sounds?"

The Buddha said to Bodhisattva Inexhaustible Intent: "Good man, suppose there are immeasurable hundreds, thousands, ten thousands, millions of living beings who are undergoing various trials and suffering. If they hear of this Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds and single-mindedly call his name, then at once he will perceive the sound of their voices and they will all gain deliverance from their trials.

"If someone, holding fast to the name of Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds, should enter a great fire, the fire could not burn him. This would come about because of this Bodhisattva's authority and supernatural power. If one were washed away by a great flood and called upon his name, one would immediately find himself in a shallow place. . . .

"Though enough yakshas¹ and rakshasas² to fill all the thousand-millionfold world should try to come and torment a person, if they hear him calling the name of Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds, then these evil demons will not even be able to look at him with their evil eyes, much less do him harm.

"Suppose there is a person who, whether guilty or not guilty, has had his body imprisoned in fetters and chains, cage and lock. If he calls the name of Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds, then all his bonds will be severed and broken and at once he will gain deliverance.

"Suppose, in a place filled with all the evil-hearted bandits of the thousand-millionfold world, there is a merchant leader who is guiding a band of merchants carrying valuable treasures over a steep and dangerous road, and that one

man shouts out these words: 'Good men, do not be afraid! You must single-mindedly call on the name of Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds. This Bodhisattva can grant fearlessness to living beings. If you call his name, you will be delivered from these evil-hearted bandits!' When the band of merchants hear this, they all together raise their voices, saying, 'Hail to the Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds!' And because they call his name, they are at once able to gain deliverance. Inexhaustible Intent, the authority and supernatural power of the Bodhisattva and Mahasattva³ Perceiver of the World's Sounds are as mighty as this!

"If there should be living beings beset by numerous lusts and cravings, let them think with constant reverence of Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds and then they can shed their desires. If they have great wrath and ire, let them think with constant reverence of Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds and then they can shed their ire. If they have great ignorance and stupidity, let them think with constant reverence of Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds and they can rid themselves of stupidity.

"Inexhaustible Intent, the Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds possesses great authority and supernatural powers, as I have described, and can confer many benefits. For this reason, living beings should constantly keep the thought of him in mind.

"If a woman wishes to give birth to a male child, she should offer obeisance and alms to Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds and then she will bear a son blessed with merit, virtue, and wisdom. And if she wishes to bear a daughter, she will bear one with all the marks of comeliness, one who in the past planted the roots of virtue and is loved and respected by many persons.

"Inexhaustible Intent, the Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds has power to do all

¹Nature forces and forest deities, very much like the elves and leprechauns of the West. They are both good and evil.

²A race of evil divine beings, but they also serve as protectors of Buddhism.

³A Sanskrit word that means "a great being."

this. If there are living beings who pay respect and obeisance to Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds, their good fortune will not be fleeting or vain. Therefore living beings should all accept and uphold the name of Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds. . . ."

Bodhisattva Inexhaustible Intent said to the Buddha, "World-Honored One, Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds — how does he come and go in this saha⁴ world? How does he preach the Law for the sake of living beings? How does the power of expedient means apply in his case?"

The Buddha said to Bodhisattva Inexhaustible Intent: "Good man, if there are living beings in the land who need someone in the body of a Buddha in order to be saved, Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds immediately manifests himself in a Buddha body and preaches the Law for them. If they need someone in a pratyekabuddha's⁵ body in order to be saved, immediately he manifests a pratyekabuddha's body and preaches the Law to them. . . . If they need King Brahma⁶ to be saved, immediately he becomes King Brahma and preaches the Law for them. If they need the lord Shakra⁷ to be saved, immediately he becomes the lord Shakra and preaches the Law for them. . . . If they need Vaishravana⁸ to be saved, immediately he becomes Vaishravana and preaches the Law for them. If they need a petty king to be saved, immediately he becomes a petty king and preaches the Law for them. If they need a rich man to be saved, immediately he becomes a rich man and preaches the Law for them. If they need a householder to be saved, immediately he becomes a

householder and preaches the Law for them. If they need a chief minister to be saved, immediately he becomes a chief minister and preaches the Law for them. If they need a Brahmin to be saved, immediately he becomes a Brahmin and preaches the Law for them. If they need a monk, a nun, a layman believer, or a laywoman believer to be saved, immediately he becomes a monk, a nun, a layman believer, or a laywoman believer and preaches the Law for them. If they need the wife of a rich man, of a householder, a chief minister, or a Brahmin to be saved, immediately he becomes those wives and preaches the Law for them. If they need a young boy or a young girl to be saved, immediately he becomes a young boy or a young girl and preaches the Law for them. If they need a heavenly being, . . . a human or a nonhuman being to be saved, immediately he becomes all of these and preaches the Law for them. If they need a vajra-bearing⁹ god to be saved, immediately he becomes a vajra-bearing god and preaches the Law for them.

"Inexhaustible Intent, this Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds has succeeded in acquiring benefits such as these and, taking on a variety of different forms, goes about among the lands saving living beings. For this reason you and the others should single-mindedly offer alms to Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds. This Bodhisattva and Mahasattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds can bestow fearlessness on those who are in fearful, pressing or difficult circumstances. That is why in this saha world everyone calls him Bestower of Fearlessness."

⁴A Sanskrit word that means "endurance"; here it refers to the present life of suffering.

⁵A solitary sage of the Theravada doctrine whose life is that of one "who walks alone." This anti-Bodhisattva, having reached Enlightenment, passes into Nirvana without heeding the woes of others.

⁶The Hindu god of creation; in Mahayana Buddhist teachings he is a protective deity who lives in one of the four meditation heavens and rules the saha world (note 4).

⁷*The Powerful Lord*, one of Indra's titles (Chapter 2, source 11); this god of thunder became a protector deity in Mahayana teachings.

⁸In the Hindu pantheon, this is Agni, a vedic god of fire and sacrifice. In the Mahayana Buddhist cosmology he is one of the Four Heavenly Kings and protects the north, the place from which the Buddha expounds the Law.

⁹A thunderbolt-wielding god.

Images of Compassion



45 ▼ THREE BODHISATTVAS

As befit a religion that preached the message of universal salvation, Mahayana Buddhism developed a strong tradition of spreading the word through every available medium. In China this meant mass printing of the sacred texts during the era of the Tang Dynasty (618–907). The oldest extant printed book known today is a Chinese copy of *The Diamond Sutra*, which dates from 868. But sutras were not enough. People, especially the illiterate, needed artistic representations of the Bodhisattvas to whom they prayed. Statues and paintings of Bodhisattvas became fixtures throughout lands in which the Mahayana doctrine took root, and as the following three statues demonstrate, images of the Bodhisattvas took many different forms.

The first statue is of Perceiver of the World's Sounds, whom we saw in source 44. Called *Avalokitesvara* in India, the home of his origin, this Bodhisattva took several different forms, one of which was an androgenous young man, and he carried that image to China, where he was known as *Guanshiyin* or, more commonly, *Guanyin*. In China Perceiver of the World's Sounds underwent a sex change. Probably because Guanyin assumed the dual functions of making women fertile and protecting them in childbirth, artists increasingly portrayed this Bodhisattva as a woman. The two images, male and female, coexisted for a while, but the female won out totally by the beginning of the twelfth century. Whether called Guanyin or *Kannon*, her Japanese name, she became the most widely beloved and prayed to Bodhisattva in East Asia. A pure and benevolent spirit, she was the gateway to the Pure Land, or Western Paradise, a heavenly way station of bliss on the road to Nirvana.

The Guanyin shown here is a gilded bronze statuette from the early years of the Sui Dynasty (589–618). Standing on a lotus blossom and wearing an ornate gown, jewelry, and a tasseled crown, she holds a flask of heavenly dew in her right hand. In her left hand Guanyin bears a willow sprig. A touch of the willow sprinkled with the dew cures all physical and spiritual disorders.

The second statue comes from the *Khmer* Kingdom (802–1406), located in the Southeast Asian land of Cambodia. The temple complexes in the Khmer capital at Angkor, which reached their heights of splendor in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, show the profound influence of Hindu culture, but they also display strong Mahayanist elements. Our statue is a late-twelfth-century representation of the Bodhisattva *Hevajra* and displays the world view of a branch of Mahayana Buddhism known as *Tantrism*. Tantrism, which originated in Hindu beliefs and practices, emphasizes magic and esoteric rituals. Beyond that it stresses the doctrine of *non-dualism*, a rejection of the notion that apparently contradictory elements — such as life and death, female and male, goodness and evil — are truly opposed to one another. Tantric Buddhism is particularly prevalent in Tibet, and this statue is markedly Tibetan in its overall form, but its Indian influences are equally apparent. Here we see an eight-faced Hevajra, with four legs (only seven

faces and two legs are visible in the picture) and sixteen arms. In each hand he holds a skull, and he dances above a corpse. Significantly, that corpse lies on a lotus blossom.

The third statue, carved in 1343, is of *Arapacana* and comes from the island of Java. He sits in the lotus position of meditation (see Chapter 1, source 8, seal 6) on a giant lotus flower. Wielding the sword of interior knowledge above his tiered crown, he clutches in his left hand the book of wisdom (*The Sutra of the Perfection of Insight*). Surrounding him are more lotuses and four lesser Bodhisattvas, who serve as his constant companions.



Guanyin



Hevajra

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. Consider Guanyin's dress, posture, facial expression, and implements. What do they combine to tell us about this Bodhisattva?
2. Review *The Lotus Sutra*. Is this statue true to the spirit and message of that sutra? If so, how?
3. What do Hevajra's multiple limbs and faces seem to connote?



Arapacana

4. Consider Hevajra in the light of Shiva Nataraja (source 43). Do they seem to present the same or similar messages? If so, does that message have anything to do with non-dualism?
5. Consider Arapacana. What does he appear to be doing? In answering this, consider his posture, his facial expression, his special sword, and the book that he holds.
6. Compare the three Bodhisattvas. What do their similarities and differences suggest about Mahayana beliefs and devotion?

Rabbinical Judaism

In 66 C.E. the Jews of Palestine broke out in general rebellion against Roman occupation, and it took the Roman armies seven bloody years to root out the last vestiges of insurgency. In the process, Jerusalem and its Temple were destroyed in the year 70. Again in 132 another Jewish revolt against Roman authority flared up, and when it was finally suppressed in 135, the rebuilt remnants of ancient Jerusalem had been transformed into a Roman military camp that was closed to Jewish habitation. Long before the destruction of the Temple and their sacred city, Jews had established prosperous communities throughout the Greco-Roman, Persian, and Arabic worlds. After these two unsuccessful rebellions, however, the Jewish flight from Palestine reached the proportions of a folk migration, and the vast majority of Jews now resided outside of their ancestral lands. The Great Dispersion, or *Diaspora*, was underway. For nineteen hundred years, Jews would be strangers in a variety of foreign lands—a people without a homeland.

In spite of these travails, Judaism survived as a living faith and culture because wherever Jews settled, they remained faithful to the memory of their special Covenant with God and their dream of returning to the Promised Land. Moreover, despite its innate conservatism, born of a need to maintain contact with the ways of the past, Judaism continued to be flexible. Jews proved adaptable to a variety of alien settings, and over the centuries Judaism continued its historical development in response to the needs of its various scattered communities.

The primary agents responsible for cementing dispersed Jewish communities together and keeping alive Judaism's distinctive traditions were its religious teachers, or *rabbis*. The destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem occasioned a shift in religious emphasis and leadership. The old priesthood that had performed Temple sacrifices lost its primacy, giving way to rabbis who presided over congregations that met to pray and study in *synagogues*. Unlike the priests of old, rabbis did not inherit their positions by virtue of birth; they achieved prominence because of their reputations for piety and mastery of the Law. During the first six centuries of the Common Era, rabbis, especially groups of them residing in Palestine and Babylon, articulated a vision of Judaism that recognized only prayer and righteous conduct as legitimate forms of communication with the Divine. There were no

heavenly saviors and no magical rituals. This was to become the core of mainstream Judaism down to the present.

A Defense of the Law



46 ▼ *Flavius Josephus*, AGAINST APION

Joseph ben Matthias (37 or 38–ca. 100), known to his Roman patrons as *Flavius Josephus*, is the most important eyewitness to the history of the Jewish people during the first century C.E. Born into a distinguished priestly family in Jerusalem, Josephus received a sound education in Jewish traditions and Greek culture. At the outbreak of the revolt against Roman occupation in 66, Josephus became leader of the Jewish forces in the north. Following an early defeat and capture at the hands of the Romans, Josephus went over to the enemy and became an advisor to two successive Roman generals, Vespasian and his son Titus. Vespasian became emperor in 69, leaving the final stages of the siege and capture of Jerusalem to Titus. Titus not only conquered and destroyed Jerusalem, he succeeded his father as emperor in 79. Following the war, Josephus was brought to Rome, where he was granted citizenship, lodged in the private household of his imperial patron, and provided with a generous pension. It was in this setting that he wrote, in Greek, a history of the Jewish War, a work flattering to the Romans but one that also attempted to present a sympathetic account of Jewish suffering and heroism. Following Titus's death in 81, Josephus found another Roman patron and continued to write on Jewish history and tradition. His *Jewish Antiquities* traces the story of his people from creation to the eve of the rebellion. More so than his earlier work, the *Antiquities* clearly rests on the argument that Judaism deserves an honored place within the Greco-Roman Ecumene. Josephus's last work was a spirited defense of Judaism entitled *Against Apion*. Written in the last decade of the first century, the work answered the anti-Jewish slanders made by many Greco-Roman critics, especially an Alexandrian grammarian named Apion. In our excerpt, which appears at the end of his tract, Josephus expounds on the Law of Moses. That Law is the body of religious regulations contained within the first five books of the Bible, books ascribed to the authorship of Moses and known collectively as the *Torah* (the Law).

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. How does Josephus compare the Law of Moses with Greek law and philosophy? What is his point? What is his apparent purpose?
2. What is his apparent reason for stating that Judaism is a *theocracy*?
3. According to Josephus, what role does the Law play in a Jew's life?
4. "Josephus compared the particularism of the Greeks with the universalism of the Jews, thereby implicitly arguing that Jews, more than Greeks, were true citizens of the Roman Commonwealth." Comment on and evaluate this statement.

Now, I maintain that our legislator¹ is the most ancient of all legislators in the record of the whole world. Compared with him, you Lycurguses² and Solons,³ . . . and all who are held in such high esteem by the Greeks appear to have been born but yesterday. Why, the very word “law” was unknown in ancient Greece. Witness Homer, who nowhere employs it in his poems. In fact, there was no such thing in his day; the masses were governed by maxims not clearly defined and by the orders of royalty, and continued long afterwards the use of unwritten customs, many of which were from time to time altered to suit particular circumstances. On the other hand, our legislator, who lived in the remotest past (that, I presume, is admitted even by our most unscrupulous detractors), proved himself the people’s best guide and counselor; and after framing a code to embrace the whole conduct of their life, induced them to accept it, and secured, on the firmest footing, its observance for all time.

Let us consider his first magnificent achievement. When our ancestors decided to leave Egypt and return to their native land, it was he who took command of all those myriads and brought them safely through a host of formidable difficulties. . . . Throughout all this he proved the best of generals, the sagest of counselors, and the most conscientious of guardians. He succeeded in making the whole people dependent upon himself, and, having secured their obedience in all things, he did not use his influence for any personal aggrandizement. No; at the very moment when leading men assume absolute and despotic power and accustom their subject to a life of extreme lawlessness, he, on the contrary, having reached that commanding position, considered it incumbent on him to live piously and to provide for his people an abundance of good laws, in the belief that this was the best means of displaying his own virtue and of ensuring the

lasting welfare of those who had made him their leader. With such noble aspirations and such a record of successful achievements, he had good reason for thinking that he had God for his guide and counselor. Having first persuaded himself that God’s will governed all his actions and all his thoughts, he regarded it as his primary duty to impress that idea upon the community; for to those who believe that their lives are under the eye of God all sin is intolerable. Such was our legislator; no charlatan or imposter, as slanderers unjustly call him, but one such as the Greeks boast of having had in Minos⁴ and later legislators. . . .

There is endless variety in the details of the customs and laws which prevail in the world at large. To give but a summary enumeration: some peoples have entrusted the supreme political power to monarchies, others to oligarchies,⁵ yet others to the masses. Our lawgiver, however, was attracted by none of these forms of polity, but gave to his constitution the form of what — if a forced expression be permitted — may be termed a “theocracy,” placing all sovereignty and authority in the hands of God. To Him he persuaded all to look, as the author of all blessings, both those which are common to all mankind, and those which they had won for themselves by prayer in the crises of their history. He convinced them that no single action, no secret thought, could be hid from Him. He represented Him as One, uncreated and immutable to all eternity; in beauty surpassing all mortal thought, made known to us by His power, although the nature of His real being passes knowledge.

That the wisest of the Greeks learned to adopt these conceptions of God from principles with which Moses supplied them, I am not now concerned to urge; but they have borne abundant witness to the excellence of these doctrines, and to their consonance with the nature and majesty

¹Moses (see Chapter 2, source 14).

²Lycurgus was the ninth-century B.C.E. lawgiver of Sparta.

³Solon (ca. 638–ca. 559 B.C.E.) was an Athenian constitutional reformer.

⁴A legendary king of Crete.

⁵Governments ruled by small factions.

of God. In fact, Pythagoras, Anaxagoras, Plato, the Stoics⁶ who succeeded him, and indeed nearly all the philosophers appear to have held similar views concerning the nature of God. These, however, addressed their philosophy to the few, and did not venture to divulge their true beliefs to the masses who had their own preconceived opinions; whereas our lawgiver, by making practice square with precept, not only convinced his own contemporaries, but so firmly implanted his belief concerning God in their descendants to all future generations that it cannot be moved. The cause of his success was that the very nature of his legislation made it [always] far more useful than any other; for he did not make religion a department of virtue, but the various virtues — I mean, justice, temperance, fortitude, and mutual harmony in all things between the members of the community — departments of religion. Religion governs all our actions and occupations and speech; none of these things did our lawgiver leave unexamined or indeterminate.

All schemes of education and moral training fall into two categories; instruction is imparted in the one case by precept, in the other by practical exercising of the character. All other legislators, differing in their opinions, selected the particular method which each preferred and neglected the other. Thus the Lacedaemonians⁷ and Cretans employed practical, not verbal, training; whereas the Athenians and nearly all the rest of the Greeks made laws enjoining what actions might or might not be performed, but neglected to familiarize the people with them by putting them into practice.

Our legislator, on the other hand, took great care to combine both systems. He did not leave practical training in morals inarticulate; nor did he permit the letter of the law to remain inoperative. Starting from the very beginning with the food of which we partake from infancy and

the private life of the home, he left nothing, however insignificant, to the discretion and caprice of the individual. What meats a man should abstain from, and what he may enjoy; with what persons he should associate; what period would be devoted respectively to strenuous labor and to rest — for all this our leader made the Law the standard and rule, that we might live under it as under a father and master, and be guilty of no sin through wilfulness or ignorance.

For ignorance he left no pretext. He appointed the Law to be the most excellent and necessary form of instruction, ordaining, not that it should be heard once for all or twice or on several occasions, but that every week men should desert their other occupations and assemble to listen to the Law and to obtain a thorough and accurate knowledge of it, a practice which all other legislators seem to have neglected. . . .

To this cause above all we owe our admirable harmony. Unity and identity of religious belief, perfect uniformity in habits and customs, produce a very beautiful concord in human character. Among us alone will be heard no contradictory statements about God, such as are common among other nations, not only on the lips of ordinary individuals under the impulse of some passing mood, but even boldly propounded by philosophers; some putting forward crushing arguments against the very existence of God, others depriving Him of His providential care for mankind. Among us alone will be seen no difference in the conduct of our lives. With us all act alike, all profess the same doctrine about God, one which is in harmony with our Law and affirms that all things are under His eye. Even our womenfolk and dependents would tell you that piety must be the motive of all our occupations in life. . . .

Our earliest imitators were the Greek philosophers, who, though ostensibly observing the laws

⁶Pythagoras was a Greek philosopher and mathematician of the sixth century B.C.E. Anaxagoras (ca. 500–428 B.C.E.) was a Greek philosopher and astronomer. For Plato, see Chapter 4, source 30. The Stoics were a Hellenistic school

of philosophy founded in Athens by Zeno (ca. 335–ca. 263 B.C.E.).

⁷The Spartans (see Chapter 4, source 28).

of their own countries, yet in their conduct and philosophy were Moses' disciples, holding similar views about God, and advocating the simple life and friendly communion between man and man. But that is not all. The masses have long since shown a keen desire to adopt our religious observances; and there is not one city, Greek or barbarian, nor a single nation, to which our custom of abstaining from work on the seventh day has not spread, and where the fasts and the lighting of lamps and many of our prohibitions in the matter of food are not observed. Moreover, they attempt to imitate our unanimity, our liberal charities, our devoted labor in the crafts, our

endurance under persecution on behalf of our laws. The greatest miracle of all is that our Law holds out no seductive bait of sensual pleasure,⁸ but has exercised this influence through its own inherent merits; and, as God permeates the universe, so the Law has found its way among all mankind. Let each man reflect for himself on his own country and his own household, and he will not disbelieve what I say. It follows, then, that our accusers must either condemn the whole world for deliberate malice in being so eager to adopt the bad laws of a foreign country in preference to the good laws of their own, or else give up their grudge against us.

⁸Jews and Christians alleged that pagan religious festivals were occasions for drinking, excessive eating, and sexual license. There was quite a bit of truth to the charge.

Persecution and Messianic Hope



47 ▼ *Maimonides, LETTER TO YEMEN*

Whenever rabbinical scholarship is the topic, one name inevitably arises: Rabbi Moses ben Maimon (1135–1204), known in the West as *Maimonides*. Maimonides possessed the most comprehensive and original intellect of medieval Jewry and composed works that deeply influenced Jewish, Muslim, and Christian contemporaries. His scholarship was immense; he composed works both in Arabic and Hebrew on such topics as the Bible, astronomy, mathematics, jurisprudence, medicine, ethics, and metaphysics. The future rabbi was born in Cordova, Spain, when the city was still a seat of Islamic power. Faced with persecution by a militant Islamic sect, Maimonides and his family were compelled to flee to Morocco in North Africa when he was a teenager. At the age of thirty he again had to take flight, from potential persecution in Morocco, and landed in Palestine, then the scene of the crusades. Finding the Promised Land bitterly disappointing, he migrated in 1167 to Islamic Egypt, where he could practice his faith freely and openly. There he became physician at the court of Sultan Saladin (1138–1193) and spent the rest of his life engaged in a ceaseless round of duties that would have destroyed a lesser person. For thirty years he served as head of the Jewish congregation of Cairo and in that capacity enjoyed wide prestige among Jewish communities throughout North Africa and Southwest Asia and carried on an extensive correspondence in which he answered questions on a wide variety of issues. Impelled by his own inner drives, he wrote voluminous treatises on every imaginable topic of Jewish religion and law. The sheer volume, scope, and depth of his writings have earned him the sobriquet *the Great Eagle*.

In 1172 Rabbi Moses composed a response to a request for advice from Jacob ben Nathanel al-Fayyumi on behalf of the Jews of Yemen, the remote region of the southwestern corner of the Arabian Peninsula. Rabbi Jacob had written to inform Maimonides of the attempt by the local sultan, 'Abd al-Nabi ibn Mahdia, to force conversion on all non-Muslims and had begged an explanation of his community's suffering. Rabbi Jacob also wanted to know how his community was to deal with the claims of a particular Jew of Yemen to be the *Messiah* (the Anointed One), the promised Redeemer of Israel who would end the Jews' exile and suffering, and also how it might be possible to foretell and recognize the Messiah's arrival.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. According to Maimonides, why are Jews persecuted?
2. What consolation does he offer them in the face of their persecutions?
3. When and where will the Messiah come, how will Jews know he has come, and what will the Messiah do?
4. Based solely on this letter, explain how the Jews of the Diaspora managed to retain their religious identity. Be specific.

You write of the affair of the rebel leader in Yemen¹ who decreed forced apostasy² of the Jews, and compelled all the Jewish inhabitants in all the places he had subdued to desert their religion, just as the Berbers had obliged them to do in the Maghreb.³ This report has broken our backs and astounded and dumbfounded the whole of our community, and rightly so. . . . There is no doubt that these are the messianic travails⁴ concerning which the sages invoked God that they be spared seeing and experiencing them. . . .

And now, brethren, it is essential that all of you give attention and consideration to what I am going to point out to you. Teach it to your women and children, so that their faith, to the extent that it has become enfeebled and impaired,

may be strengthened, and that enduring certainty may be reestablished in their hearts. It is — may the Lord deliver you and me — that ours is the true and divine religion, revealed to us through Moses, chief of the former as well as of the later prophets. By means of it God has distinguished us from the rest of mankind. . . .

Since God has singled us out by His laws and precepts, and our preeminence over the others was manifested in His rules and statutes, . . . all the nations, instigated by envy and impiety, rose up against us in anger, and all the kings of the earth, motivated by injustice and enmity, applied themselves to persecute us. They wanted to thwart God, but He will not be thwarted. Ever since the time of revelation⁵ every despot or rebel ruler, be he violent or ignoble, has made it his

¹Abd al-Nabi ibn Mahdia, who conquered most of Yemen around 1170.

²*Apostasy* is abandonment of a religion.

³The Berber *Almohads* forced conversions on non-Muslims in Morocco, which is located in western North Africa (the *Maghreb*), from the 1150s to the 1180s. Maimonides had

twice fled such persecution by the Almohads: first from Spain and later from Morocco.

⁴Dreadful disasters will precede the coming of the Messiah.

⁵Biblical times when God revealed Himself through Moses and the other prophets.

first aim and his final purpose to destroy our Law, and to vitiate our religion by means of the sword, by violence, or by brute force. . . .

After that a new class arose that combined the two methods, namely, conquest, controversy, and dispute into one,⁶ because it believed that this procedure would be more effective in wiping out every trace of the community. It therefore resolved to lay claim to prophecy and to found a new Law, contrary to our divine religion, and to contend that it also came from God, like the true claim. . . .

Indeed God assured our father Jacob that although his children would be humbled and overcome by the nations, they and not the nations would survive and would endure. . . . The Lord has given us assurance through His prophets that we are indestructible and imperishable, and we will always continue to be a preeminent community. As it is impossible for God to cease to exist, so is our destruction and disappearance from the world unthinkable. . . .

Put your trust in these true texts of Scripture, brethren, and be not dismayed by the succession of persecutions or the enemy's ascendancy over us, or the weakness of our people. These trials are designed to test and purify us, so that only the saints and the pious men of the pure and undefiled lineage of Jacob will adhere to our religion and remain within the fold. . . .

Now, all my fellow countrymen in the Diaspora, it behooves you to hearten one another, the elders to guide the youth, and the leaders to direct the masses. Gain the assent of your community to the Truth that is immutable and unchangeable, and to the following postulates of the true faith that shall never fail. God is one in a unique sense of the term. And Moses, His prophet and spokesman, is the greatest and most perfect of all the seers. To him was vouchsafed

the knowledge of God, what has never been vouchsafed to any prophet before him, nor will it be in the future. The entire Torah from beginning to end was spoken by God to Moses. . . . It will never be abrogated or superseded, neither supplemented nor abridged. Never shall it be supplanted by another divine law containing positive or negative duties. Keep the revelation at Mount Sinai⁷ well in mind in accordance with the divine precept to perpetuate the memory and not to forget this persecution. Let these persons exult who suffer dire misfortunes, are deprived of their riches, are forced into exile, and lose their belongings. For the bearing of these hardships is a source of glory and a great achievement in the sight of God. Whoever is visited by these calamities is like a burnt offering upon the altar. . . .

This is how matters stand regarding the era of the Messiah, may he speedily come. For while the gentiles believe that our nation will never constitute an independent state, nor will it ever rise above its present condition, and all the astrologers, diviners, and augurs concur in this opinion, God will prove their views and beliefs false, and will order the advent of the Messiah. . . .

It is, my coreligionists, one of the fundamental articles of the Jewish faith that most surely the future redeemer of Israel will spring only from the stock of Solomon son of David.⁸ He will gather our nation, assemble our exile, redeem us from our degradation, propagate the true religion, and exterminate his opponents, as God promised us in the Torah. . . . The hour of his arrival will be at a time of great catastrophe and dire misfortune for Israel. . . . Then God will bring him forth and he will fulfill the promises made in his behalf. . . .

From the prophecies of Daniel⁹ and Isaiah¹⁰ and from the statements of our sages it is clear

⁶After the pagans of antiquity, there arose a new class of persecutors — Christians and Muslims — who used two methods: armed conquest and conversion through disputation.

⁷See Chapter 2, source 14, note 2.

⁸David was king of Israel around 1000 B.C.E. and was succeeded by his son Solomon (r. ca. 962–922 B.C.E.). Accord-

ing to Jewish biblical tradition, the kingdom reached the heights of its power under Solomon.

⁹The Book of Daniel, composed during the second century B.C.E., was the last of the canonical books of the *Tanakh*, or Jewish Bible, to be written.

¹⁰See Chapter 3, source 22.

that the advent of the Messiah will take place some time subsequent to the universal expansion of the Roman and Arab empires, which is an actuality today. This fact is true beyond question or doubt. Daniel is the last prophet to portray the kingdom of the Arabs, the rise of Muhammad, and then the arrival of the Messiah. . . .

As to the place where the Messiah will make his first appearance, He informs us that he will first present himself only in the land of Israel. . . . As to the how of his advent, nothing at all will be known about it before it occurs. The Messiah is not a person concerning whom it may be predicted that he will be the son of so-and-so, or of the family of so-and-so. On the contrary, he will be unknown before his coming, but he will prove by means of miracles and wonders that he is the true Messiah. . . . The redemption will not be reversed so that it will appear in distant lands first, and ultimately reach Palestine.

What the great powers are that all the prophets from Moses to Malachi¹¹ ascribe to the Messiah may be inferred from various statements in the twenty-four books of Scripture. The most significant of them is that the report of his advent will strike terror into the hearts of all the kings of the earth, and their kingdoms will fall; neither will they be able to war or revolt against him. They will neither defame nor calumniate him, for the miracles he will perform will frighten them into complete silence. . . .

I do not believe that this man who has appeared among you possesses these powers. You know that the Christians falsely ascribe marvelous powers to Jesus the Nazarene, may his bones be ground to dust, such as the resurrection of the dead and other miracles. Even if we granted this for the sake of argument, we should not be convinced by their reasoning that Jesus is the Messiah. For we can bring a thousand proofs from Scripture that it is not so even from their point of view. Indeed, will anyone arrogate this rank

to himself unless he wishes to make himself a laughing stock?

In sum, had this man acted presumptuously or disdainfully, I would deem him worthy of death. The truth seems to be that he became melancholy and lost his mind. In my opinion, it is most advisable, both for your good and for his, that you put him in iron chains for a while, until the gentiles learn that he is demented. After you have blazoned and bruited abroad the intelligence concerning this man among them, you may release him without endangering his safety. If the gentiles gain knowledge about him after he has been locked up by you, they will taunt him and pronounce him irrational, and you will remain unmolested by him. If you procrastinate until they learn of this affair of their own accord, you will most likely incur their wrath. Remember, my coreligionists, that on account of the vast number of our sins God has hurled us into the midst of this people, the Arabs, who have persecuted us severely, and passed baneful and discriminatory legislation against us.¹² . . .

The prophets have predicted and instructed us, as I have told you, that pretenders and simulators will appear in great numbers at the time when the advent of the true Messiah will draw nigh, but they will not be able to make good their claim. They will perish with many of their partisans. . . .

May God, who created the world with the attribute of mercy, grant us to behold the ingathering of the exiles to the portion of His inheritance, to contemplate the graciousness of the Lord, and to visit early in His temple. May He take us out from the Valley of the Shadow of Death wherein He put us. May He remove darkness from our eyes and gloom from our hearts. . . . May He darken our opponents in His anger and wrath, may He illuminate our obscurity, as He promised us. . . .

Greetings unto you, my dear friend, master of the sciences, and paragon of learning, and unto

¹¹The Book of Malachi is a prophetic work that dates to the late sixth or early fifth century B.C.E.

¹²The *Dhimma*, or contract with unbelievers (see Chapter 8, source 63).

our erudite colleagues, and unto all the rest of the people. Peace, peace, as the light shines, and much peace until the moon be no more. Amen.

I beg you to send a copy of this missive to every community in the cities and hamlets, in order to strengthen the people in their faith and put them on their feet. Read it at public gatherings and in private, and you will thus become a public benefactor. Take adequate precautions lest its contents be divulged by an evil person and mishap overtake us. (God spare us therefrom.)¹³

¹³If this letter falls into the hands of non-Jews, the Jews of Yemen will suffer.

¹⁴Maimonides holds a position of trust in the court of the

When I began writing this letter I had some misgivings about it, but they were overruled by my conviction that the public welfare takes precedence over one's personal safety.¹⁴ Moreover, I am sending it to a personage such as you. . . . Our sages, the successors of the prophets,¹⁵ assured us that persons engaged in a religious mission will meet with no disaster. What more important religious mission is there than this! Peace be unto all Israel. Amen.

Saladin, a pious champion of Islam, and is placing himself in peril by composing this letter.

¹⁵The rabbis.

Chapter 7

Christianity

Conquering the World for Christ

Mainstream Jewish thought perceived no meaningful distinction between church and state because Judaism's special Covenant with God bound it body and soul to the Lord of the Universe. Jews therefore believed that, as God's people, they had been given a sanctified homeland. When they were dispossessed of that inheritance and scattered among the gentiles, they believed it was because of their sins. They further believed that should they reform their ways and fully observe their holy Covenant with God, they would regain sovereign possession of Palestine. By right, this Holy Land and its Chosen People should be ruled according to the Law given them by God through Moses and interpreted by their rabbis.

Not all Jewish sects, however, accepted this interpretation of the Covenant. One such dissident element was a small body of religious Jews who gathered around a prophet from Nazareth called *Joshua* or, in Greek, *Jesus* (ca. 4 B.C.E.—ca. 30 C.E.). The heart of Jesus' message was that the promised messianic Kingdom of God was at hand. The *Messiah* (the Anointed One) — God's promised deliverer — was generally expected to be a political and military leader, who would re-establish Israel as a free state. Jesus, to the contrary, expanding upon certain themes in the teachings of Second Isaiah (Chapter 3, source 22), preached that the Messiah would usher in a spiritual age of judgment and redemption.

As his ministry developed, Jesus became convinced he was the Messiah. Although he claimed, "My kingdom is not of this Earth," local Roman and Jewish authorities were disquieted by the threat to the establishment that Jesus and his followers seemed to offer, and they conspired successfully to execute him by crucifixion. Jesus' followers believed, however, that he rose from the dead, appeared to a number of his friends, and then ascended to Heaven with the promise of returning soon to sit in judgment of all humanity. Believing

that his resurrection proved Jesus' messiahship, his disciples proceeded to spread the *Gospel* (Good News) of redemption.

At first these disciples preached only to Palestinian Jews. Within a short time, however, they spread the faith throughout the entire Roman Empire and beyond, welcoming both Jew and gentile to receive the *New Covenant* proclaimed by Jesus. Before the end of the first century C.E., *Christians* (called so because of Jesus' title *Christos*, which is Greek for *Messiah*) had established the faith in every major city of the Roman Empire and had penetrated the Parthian Empire, non-Roman Africa, Arabia, and the west coast of India. In the early fourth century Christianity was adopted as the state religion of the Axumite Kingdom of Ethiopia, became the favored religion of the Roman Emperor Constantine I (r. 306–337), and took root among a number of German tribes beyond the northeast frontiers of the Roman Empire. In the seventh century a group of dissident Christians known as *Nestorians* established themselves in western China. This otherworldly faith was waging a successful campaign of spiritual conquest in a fair portion of the Afro-Eurasian World.

The Foundations of Christianity

During Christianity's first century, its adherents had to define the religion to which they gave their allegiance. Just as important, they had to confront the issue of what Christianity *was not*. Were they Jews? Were they something else? If something else, what set their religion apart from Judaism and all of the other religions that flourished within the Greco-Roman World? In essence, what did they believe, and how should they organize themselves?

In resolving these issues, Christians had the guidance of several great teachers. First and foremost was Jesus himself. His call for spiritual perfection was the foundation of the Christian faith and has remained so for almost two thousand years. Following Jesus' departure from the world, his followers had to grapple with many unresolved questions: Who was Jesus? What was his relationship with God and humanity? What was the nature of the community he had left behind? Among the many leaders who tried to answer these questions, none was more influential than *Paul of Tarsus*, who laid down the basic theological framework for this emerging church.

Becoming Spiritually Perfect



48 ▼ THE GOSPEL OF SAINT MATTHEW

Tradition ascribes authorship of the *Gospels*, the four major accounts of Jesus of Nazareth's life and teachings, to authors known as Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The early Christian Church believed that Matthew had been one of Jesus' Twelve *Apostles*, or major companions, and accepted his Gospel as the authoritative remembrances of a divinely inspired author. Modern scholarship dates the work to the period around 85 or 90, or approximately fifty-five to sixty years after Jesus' ministry. Its author appears to have been a Christian of Antioch in Syria and possibly a disciple of the Apostle Matthew, but probably not the apostle himself. The author clearly was trained in the Jewish rabbinical tradition but was equally comfortable with the Greek language and Hellenistic culture, and he seems to have addressed his Gospel to a cosmopolitan Christian community made up of former Jews and gentiles.

The central theme of the Gospel of Matthew is that Jesus is the Messiah, the fulfillment of the promises made by God through Abraham, Moses, and the prophets. More than that, as the promised Messiah, Jesus is the Son of God. For Matthew, Second Isaiah was the greatest of the prophets, the one who had most clearly foretold Jesus' mission of salvation and who had preached that the universal reign of the Lord was imminent. In the following selection Matthew presents what is commonly known as the *Sermon on the Mount*. Here Jesus instructs his followers about what the *Kingdom of God* requires of all its members. In all likelihood, what Matthew presents is not a verbatim account of a specific sermon that Jesus delivered on some mountainside but a distillation of Jesus' core moral and theological teachings. As you read this excerpt, keep in mind that Jesus lived in the environment that produced Rabbinical Judaism and was, himself, considered a rabbi, or teacher.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. Jesus establishes priorities for his followers. What are they?
2. In what ways does Jesus emphasize the spiritual relationship of each believer to God?
3. How does Jesus regard Judaism and especially the Law of Moses? In what ways does he claim that his teachings complete, or perfect, the Law of Moses?
4. What does Matthew mean when he states that Jesus taught with authority and was not like the scribes? Why does Jesus question the authority of the scribes and Pharisees? What is the presumed basis of Jesus' authority?
5. To whom would Jesus' message especially appeal?
6. Compare the message and spirit behind the Sermon on the Mount with that of the Buddha's first sermon "Setting in Motion the Wheel of the Law" (Chapter 3, source 19). Which strike you as more pronounced, their differences or similarities? What do you conclude from your answer?

Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down his disciples came to him. And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.

“Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in Heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets who were before you. . . .

“Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, till Heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Whoever then relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of Heaven; but he who does them and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of Heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the

scribes and the Pharisees,¹ you will never enter the kingdom of Heaven.

“You have heard that it was said to the men of old, ‘You shall not kill; and whoever kills shall be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that every one who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother shall be liable to the council,² and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be liable to the hell of fire. So if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. . . . You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, Do not resist one who is evil. But if any one strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. . . . You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in Heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? . . . You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. . . .

“And in praying do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Pray then like this:

Our Father who art in Heaven.

Hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come,

Thy will be done,

On earth as it is in Heaven.

¹The *scribes* were nonpriestly professionals who copied, interpreted, and applied the oral traditions that supplemented written biblical Law. The *Pharisees* were members of a Jewish religious party who stressed that all of this nonscriptural, oral law had to be observed as equally and as fully as the written Law of Moses. Eventually this *Oral Torah*, as it was often called, became codified

in the *Talmud*, which was codified in two major editions between about 200 and 600: an earlier and shorter one in Palestine and a later and fuller one in Babylonia. The *Talmud* has served as a major source for Rabbinical Judaism to the present.

²The *Sanhedrin*, Judaism’s chief religious and judicial body.

Give us this day our daily bread;
 And forgive us our debts,
 As we also have forgiven our debtors
 And lead us not into temptation,
 But deliver us from evil.

For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. . . .

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your

heart be also. . . . Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek all these things; and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well. . . .

“Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get. . . .”

And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.

The Path to Righteousness: The Law or Faith?



49 ▼ Saint Paul, *THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS*

Our earliest Christian sources are not the Gospels but rather the *epistles*, or letters, that Saint Paul (ca. 3 B.C.E.–64 or 67 C.E.) wrote to a number of Christian communities. Paul, or to give him his Hebrew name, *Saul*, was a Hellenized Jew and rabbinical scholar from Tarsus in Asia Minor and has often been called *the second founder of Christianity*. Prior to his becoming a Christian, Paul was a member of the Jewish elite of the eastern Mediterranean. A Roman citizen, which was rare for Jews of his day, he studied under the leading pharisaical rabbi of his day, became a noted Pharisee himself, and probably was elevated to membership in the Sanhedrin, Judaism’s supreme religious and judicial body. Converted dramatically to Christianity by a blinding revelation while traveling to Damascus in Syria in the pursuit of Christians whom he was persecuting, Paul became the leading opponent of certain Christian conservatives who wished to keep Christianity within the boundaries of Judaism. From roughly 47 to his death in Rome in either 64 or 67 (ancient authorities differ on the date), Paul was an indefatigable missionary, converting gentiles and Jews alike throughout the Mediterranean region. Most important of all, Paul transformed Jesus’ messianic message into a faith centering on Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Paul developed his distinctive theology in his epistles, his only extant writings. Although each epistle was addressed to a specific group of Christians and often dealt with local issues, they were revered as authoritative pronouncements of general interest for all believers. As a result, copies were circulated, and in time some of his letters (as well as some Paul never composed but that were ascribed to him) were incorporated into the body of scriptural books known to Christians as the *New Testament* (the *Old Testament* being the pre-Christian, or Jewish, portion of the Bible).

Around 57, probably while residing in Corinth, Greece, Paul planned to establish a mission in Spain and decided to make Rome his base of operations. In preparation, he wrote to the Christians at Rome to inform them of his plans and to instruct them in the faith. The result was the *Epistle to the Romans*, the most fully articulated expression of Paul's theology of salvation.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. According to Paul, who was Jesus?
2. This epistle centers on the issue of how one becomes righteous in the eyes of God. According to Paul, the former Pharisee and member of the Sanhedrin, can the Law of Moses or any other body of law put one right with God? Why or why not? What role does faith play in putting one right with God? Faith in what or whom?
3. For Paul, what two virtues, or qualities, must dominate a Christian's life?
4. What do you infer from the evidence about the role of women in the early Church?
5. Like Second Isaiah (Chapter 3, source 22), Paul believes that God has a master plan for all humanity. How does Paul's understanding of that plan differ from that of his sixth-century B.C.E. predecessor?
6. Compare this epistle with the Sermon on the Mount. Do they agree, disagree, or complement one another? Be specific.
7. What parallels can you discover between Christian devotion to Jesus, as taught by Paul, and similar contemporary forms of piety and belief in the Hindu and Buddhist traditions? In answering this question, consider the sources in Chapter 6.

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle,¹ set apart for the Gospel of God which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, the Gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David² according to the flesh and designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about obedience to the faith for the sake of his name among all the nations,

including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus Christ;

"To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints: . . . I am eager to preach the Gospel to you also who are in Rome.

For I am not ashamed of the Gospel: it is the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.³ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, "He who through faith is righteous shall live." . . . For we hold that

¹Paul was not one of the original Twelve *Apostles*, Jesus' closest companions. He claimed apostolic status because he believed he had been miraculously called and converted by the Risen Christ, who appeared to him in a vision. Some of the close friends and earliest followers of Jesus were reluctant to recognize Paul as an apostle.

²The prophetic tradition maintained that the Messiah would

be descended from the line of King David (see Maimonides, Chapter 6, source 47). Consequently, Christian Jews stressed Jesus' Davidic lineage.

³*Greek* means any non-Jew, or gentile, because Greek was the common tongue of educated people in the eastern half of the Roman Empire.

a man is justified⁴ by faith apart from works of law.⁵ Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of gentiles also? Yes, of gentiles also, since God is one; and he will justify the circumcised⁶ on the ground of their faith and the uncircumcised because of their faith. . . . The promise to Abraham⁷ and his descendants, that they should inherit the world, did not come through the Law but through the righteousness of faith. If it is the adherents of the Law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. . . . That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants — not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham, for he is the father of us all, as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations.” . . .

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God. . . . God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we are now justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. . . . There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death. . . .

If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For man believes with his heart and so is justified, and he confesses with his lips and so is saved. The scripture says, “No one who believes in him will be put to shame.” For there is no distinction be-

tween Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and bestows his riches upon all who call upon him. For, “every one who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.” . . .

I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. . . . Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with brotherly affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Never flag in zeal, be aglow with the Spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in your hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints, practice hospitality.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; never be conceited. Repay no one evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends upon you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God; for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” No, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. . . .

Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the Law. The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not kill, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,” and any other commandment, are summed up in this sentence, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the Law. . . .

I commend to you to our sister Phoebe, a deaconess of the church at Cenchreae,⁸ that you may

⁴Made just, or righteous, in the eyes of God.

⁵The Law of Judaism.

⁶The Law of Moses prescribes circumcision for all Jewish males; gentiles are, therefore, *the uncircumcised*.

⁷The ancient patriarch from whom all Jews were descended and with whom YHWH entered into a covenant.

⁸A community in the Greek Peloponnesus. *Deaconesses* and their male counterparts, *deacons*, were assistants to the *presbyters* (elders) who supervised the various churches. The duties of these assistants consisted of baptizing, preaching, and dispensing charity.

receive her in the Lord as befits the saints, and help her in whatever she may require from you, for she has been a helper of many and of myself as well.

Greet Prisca and Aquila,⁹ my fellow workers

in Christ Jesus, who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I but also all the churches of the gentiles give thanks; greet also the church in their house.

⁹A married couple of Hellenized Jewish-Christians who figured prominently in the Christian community of Rome. Prisca was the wife; Aquila the husband.

Christianity and the Roman World

Roman authorities were generally tolerant of the diverse deities and religious practices of the empire's subjects. Normally all they required was that the various cults and their devotees not manifestly threaten public order and morality and that each religion help guarantee the gods' continued favor toward the state. Yet as far as many Romans were concerned, Christians violated those basic requirements because of their uncompromising monotheism and extreme sense of exclusivity. Although Jews shared those characteristics, Judaism enjoyed the status of being the legally recognized religion of one of Rome's subject people. Once Christianity separated itself from the Jewish synagogues, it lost whatever protection it had enjoyed by reason of its Judaic heritage.

Unyielding adherence to the Christian religion became a crime, at least theoretically punishable by death, from the age of Emperor Nero (r. 54–68) onward. Despite this, persecution of Christians was sporadic, local, and often halfhearted for almost the next two centuries. When persecutions occurred before the mid third century, it was usually only when provincial governors found themselves forced to bow to local sentiment in order to keep a discontented populace quiet. Crop failures and other natural disasters often seemed to demand a few Christian victims as propitiation to the gods, the theory being that the Christians were atheists and had angered the gods by their refusal to worship them. This policy of overlooking the Christians' supposed atheism and immorality changed around the year 250, when Emperor Decius embarked on a short but bitter empirewide attack on Christians.

In 303 the empire launched its last and greatest persecution of Christianity; the attack continued until 311 when Emperor Galerius, in the grips of a frightening disease, decided to strike a bargain with the Christian God. His edict of toleration granted Christians freedom of worship, in exchange for their prayers for him. A few days after issuing the edict, Galerius was dead.

The following year, *Constantine I* (r. 306–337), a claimant to the imperial throne, was campaigning in Italy against a rival. According to Eusebius of Caesarea (source 50), prior to the battle Constantine had a vision in which the Christian God promised him victory, and shortly thereafter he won a decisive victory, thereby becoming uncontested emperor in the West. In gratitude, Constantine and the emperor

of the eastern half of the empire met in 313 at Milan, in northern Italy, where they reached an agreement regarding freedom of worship for all persons in the empire and recognition of the full legal status of each local Christian Church. Christianity had weathered the storm of Roman persecution.

After the meeting at Milan, Constantine never wavered in his patronage of Christianity, and the consequences were momentous for the empire, for Christianity, and for the subsequent civilizations of western Eurasia. A faith that commanded the belief of only about 10 percent of the empire's population in 313 was, by century's end, the religion of the vast majority of eastern Mediterranean urban dwellers and making rapid advances among the region's rural populations. In the western half of the empire the progress of conversion was slower but steady.

Persecution and Deliverance



50 ▼ *Eusebius of Caesarea,* *ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY*

Eusebius (ca. 260–339 or 340), leader, or *bishop*, of the church of Caesarea in Palestine, was a prolific writer. His single most enduring work is his *Ecclesiastical History*, which traces the fortunes of the Christian Church from its earliest days to the early fourth century. This history has rightly earned Eusebius the title *Father of Church History*, inasmuch as it is the most complete and coherent account that we possess of the early Church's first three centuries.

Eusebius's careful scholarship, however, did not negate the *Ecclesiastical History*'s apologetical tone and theological message. Within its pages history is a cosmic contest between the forces of God and those of the Devil. On the one side are patriarchs, prophets, saints, and martyrs; on the other are pagans, persecutors, latter-day Jews, and *heretical*, or wrong-believing, Christians. Although the Devil and his minions always lose, the righteous suffer considerably as they struggle against evil.

More than simply a scholar, Eusebius was active in the affairs of the early fourth-century Church and suffered in the process. He had been imprisoned during the era of the Great Persecution (303–311) and had seen many of his friends tortured and martyred. But he also lived to see the miracle of the Emperor Constantine's conversion to Christianity after the emperor's victory in 312. Following Eusebius's elevation to the bishopric of Caesarea around 313, this church leader came to enjoy the Christian emperor's patronage and friendship.

Earlier, before the onslaught of the Great Persecution, Eusebius had begun a detailed history of the Church down to his own day, completing the work in seven volumes around 303. The events of 312 and following, however, necessitated that he update his work. Consequently, he enlarged the *Ecclesiastical History* to ten books in order to include the history of Christian fortunes down to 324, thereby demonstrating the manner in which Divine Providence had once again triumphed over the forces of evil.

Our three excerpts come from Book 5, an appendix to Book 8 entitled “The Martyrs of Palestine,” and Book 10. Note the significant differences in tone and message between the first two excerpts and the third, which deals with Constantine’s victory in 324 over Licinius, his former coemperor.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. How did Eusebius distinguish between the history he wrote and the history that pagan Greeks and Romans wrote? Why did he make the distinction?
2. Consider the second excerpt. Why do you think Eusebius dwells on the punishments that Christian confessors bore?
3. What does his description of the heroism of the two female martyrs suggest about Christian notions of the place of women in the Church?
4. Compare your answer to question 3 of this source with your answer to question 4 of source 49. What conclusions do you reach?
5. Some see a dramatic difference in tone and message between what Eusebius writes in the first two excerpts and what he writes in the third excerpt. Do you see a difference? If so, how do you explain it?

BOOK 5

Other writers of history record the victories of war and trophies won from enemies, the skill of generals, and the manly bravery of soldiers, defiled with blood and with innumerable slaughters for the sake of children and country and other possessions. But our narrative of the government of God will record in ineffaceable letters the most peaceful wars waged in behalf of the peace of the soul, and will tell of men doing brave deeds for truth rather than country, and for piety rather than dearest friends. It will hand down to imperishable remembrance the discipline and the much-tried fortitude of the athletes of religion, the trophies won from demons, the victories over invisible enemies, and the crowns placed upon their heads.

THE MARTYRS OF PALESTINE

Up to the sixth year¹ the storm had been incessantly raging against us. Before this time there had been a very large number of confessors² of religion in the so-called Porphyry quarry in Thebais,³ which gets its name from the stone found there.⁴ Of these, one hundred men, lacking three, together with women and infants, were sent to the governor of Palestine. When they confessed the God of the universe and Christ, Firmilianus, who had been sent there as a governor in the place of Urbanus, directed, in accordance with the imperial command, that they should be maimed by burning the sinews of the ankles of their left feet, and that their right eyes with the eyelids and pupils should first be cut out, and then destroyed by hot irons to the very

¹The sixth year of the persecution, which began in the spring of 303.

²Those who confess, or proclaim and live, the faith in a heroic manner.

³The region around Thebes in Egypt.

⁴Slave labor in stone quarries and mines, which usually ended in death, was a common criminal penalty.

roots. And he then sent them to the mines in the province to endure hardships with severe toil and suffering.

But it was not sufficient that these only who suffered such miseries should be deprived of their eyes, but those natives of Palestine also, who were mentioned just above as condemned to pugilistic combat,⁵ since they would neither receive food from the royal storehouse nor undergo the necessary preparatory exercises. Having been brought on this account not only before the overseers, but also before Maximinus himself,⁶ and having manifested the noblest persistence in confession by the endurance of hunger and stripes, they received like punishment with those whom we have mentioned, and with them other confessors in the city of Caesarea. Immediately afterwards others who were gathered to hear the Scriptures read, were seized in Gaza,⁷ and some endured the same sufferings in the feet and eyes; but others were afflicted with yet greater torments and with most terrible tortures in the sides. One of these, in body a woman, but in understanding a man, would not endure the threat of rape, and spoke directly against the tyrant who entrusted the government to such cruel judges. She was first scourged and then raised aloft on the stake, and her sides lacerated. As those appointed for this purpose applied the tortures incessantly and severely at the command of the judge, another, with mind fixed, like the former, on virginity as her aim, — a woman who was altogether mean in form and contemptible in appearance, but, on the other hand, strong in soul, and endowed with an understanding superior to her body, — being unable to bear the merciless and cruel and inhuman deeds, with a boldness beyond that of the combatants famed among the Greeks,⁸ cried out to the judge from the midst of the crowd: “And how long will you

thus cruelly torture my sister?” But he was greatly enraged and ordered the woman to be immediately seized. Thereupon she was brought forward and having called herself by the august name of the Savior, she was first urged by words to sacrifice, and as she refused she was dragged by force to the altar. But her sister continued to maintain her former zeal, and with intrepid and resolute foot kicked the altar, and overturned it with the fire that was on it. Thereupon the judge, enraged like a wild beast, inflicted on her such tortures in her sides as he never had on any one before, striving almost to glut himself with her raw flesh. But when his madness was satiated, he bound them both together, this one and her whom she called sister, and condemned them to death by fire. It is said that the first of these was from the country of Gaza; the other, by name Valentina, was of Caesarea, and was well known to many.

BOOK 10

Thanks for all things be given unto God the Omnipotent Ruler and King of the universe, and the greatest thanks to Jesus Christ the Savior and Redeemer of our souls, through whom we pray that peace may be always preserved for us firm and undisturbed by external troubles and troubles of the mind. Since in accordance with your wishes, my most holy Paulinus,⁹ we have added the tenth book of the Church History to those which have preceded, we will inscribe it to you, proclaiming you as the seal of the whole work; and we will fitly add in a perfect number¹⁰ the perfect panegyric upon the restoration of the churches, obeying the Divine Spirit which exhorts us in the following words: “Sing unto the Lord a new song, for he hath done marvelous things. His right hand and his holy arm hath

⁵They were condemned to fight as boxing gladiators in the circus.

⁶Maximin Daia, emperor in the East from 305 to 313.

⁷The southern coastal region of Palestine.

⁸Professional wrestlers and boxers. See Chapter 5, source 32.

⁹The bishop of Tyre, whom Eusebius especially admired.

¹⁰According to Pythagorean numerology, 10 is the perfect number because it is the sum of the four principal geometric numbers: 1, 2, 3, and 4.

saved him. The Lord hath made known his salvation, his righteousness hath he revealed in the presence of the nations."¹¹ And in accordance with the utterance which commands us to sing the new song, let us proceed to show that, after those terrible and gloomy spectacles which we have described, we are now permitted to see and celebrate such things as many truly righteous men and martyrs of God before us desired to see upon earth and did not see, and to hear and did not hear. But they, hastening on, obtained far better things, being carried to Heaven and the paradise of divine pleasure. But, acknowledging that even these things are greater than we deserve, we have been astonished at the grace manifested by the author of the great gifts, and rightly do we admire him, worshiping him with the whole power of our souls, and testifying to the truth of those recorded utterances, in which it is said, "Come and see the works of the Lord, the wonders which he hath done upon the earth; he removeth wars to the ends of the world, he shall break the bow and snap the spear in sunder, and shall burn the shields with fire."¹² Rejoicing in these things which have been clearly fulfilled in our day, let us proceed with our account.

The whole race of God's enemies was destroyed in the manner indicated, and was thus suddenly swept from the sight of men. So that again a divine utterance had its fulfillment: "I have seen the impious highly exalted and raising himself like the cedars of Lebanon; and I have passed by, and behold, he was not; and I have sought his place, and it could not be found."¹³ And finally a bright and splendid day, overshadowed by no cloud, illuminated with beams of heavenly light the churches of Christ throughout the entire world. And not even those outside our communion¹⁴ were prevented from sharing in the same

blessings, or at least from coming under their influence and enjoying a part of the benefits bestowed upon us by God.

All men, then, were freed from the oppression of the tyrants, and being released from the former ills, one in one way and another in another acknowledged the defender of the pious to be the only true God. And we especially who placed our hopes in the Christ of God had unspeakable gladness, and a certain inspired joy bloomed for all of us, when we saw every place which shortly before had been desolated by the impieties of the tyrants reviving as if from a long and death-fraught pestilence, and temples again rising from their foundations to an immense height, and receiving a splendor far greater than that of the old ones which had been destroyed. But the supreme rulers also confirmed to us still more extensively the munificence of God by repeated ordinances in behalf of the Christians; and personal letters of the emperor were sent to the bishops, with honors and gifts of money. It may not be unfitting to insert these documents, translated from the Roman into the Greek tongue, at the proper place in this book, as in a sacred tablet, that they may remain as a memorial to all who shall come after us. . . .

To him, therefore, God granted, from Heaven above, the deserved fruit of piety, the trophies of victory over the impious, and he cast the guilty one with all his counselors and friends prostrate at the feet of Constantine. For when Licinius¹⁵ carried his madness to the last extreme, the emperor, the friend of God, thinking that he ought no longer to be tolerated, acting upon the basis of sound judgement, and mingling the firm principles of justice with humanity, gladly determined to come to the protection of those who were oppressed by the tyrant, and undertook, by

¹¹The Bible, Psalms, 98:1–2.

¹²Psalms, 46:8–9.

¹³Psalms, 37:35–36.

¹⁴Non-Christians and Christian heretics.

¹⁵Licinius had been coemperor since 308. In 313 he and Constantine allied, with Constantine taking the western half of the empire. In 316 Constantine attacked Licinius's lands, on the pretext that Licinius was persecuting Chris-

tians, and confiscated a major portion of the eastern half of the empire. In 324 Constantine returned to complete the job, on the same pretext. After capturing Licinius and uniting the entire empire under his control, Constantine had his former colleague murdered within a year. Circumstances thus forced Eusebius to excise earlier complimentary allusions to Licinius from his last edition of the *Ecclesiastical History*.

putting a few destroyers out of the way, to save the greater part of the human race. For when he had formerly exercised humanity alone and had shown mercy to him who was not worthy of sympathy, nothing was accomplished; for Licinius did not renounce his wickedness, but rather increased his fury against the people that were subject to him, and there was left to the afflicted no hope of salvation, oppressed as they were by a savage beast. Wherefore, the protector of the virtuous, mingling hatred for evil with love for good, went forth with his son Crispus,¹⁶ a most beneficent prince, and extended a saving right hand to all that were perishing. Both of them, father and son, under the protection, as it were, of God, the universal King, with the Son of God, the Savior of all, as their leader and ally, drew up their forces on all sides against the enemies of the Deity and won an easy victory; God having prospered them in the battle in all respects according to their wish. Thus, suddenly, and sooner than can be told, those who yesterday and the day before breathed death and threatening were no more, and not even their names were remembered, but their inscriptions and their honors suffered the merited disgrace. And the things which Licinius with his own eyes had seen come upon the former impious tyrants he himself likewise suffered, because he did not receive instruction nor learn wisdom from the chastisements of his neighbors, but followed the same path of impiety which they had trod, and was justly hurled over the same precipice. Thus he lay prostrate.

¹⁶Crispus was Constantine's eldest son and had held the title of *Caesar* (deputy emperor) since 317. He served with distinction in the war of 324, commanding Constantine's

But Constantine, the mightiest victor, adorned with every virtue of piety, together with his son Crispus, a most God-beloved prince, and in all respects like his father, recovered the East which belonged to them; and they formed one united Roman empire as of old, bringing under their peaceful sway the whole world from the rising of the sun to the opposite quarter, both north and south, even to the extremities of the declining day. All fear therefore of those who had formerly afflicted them was taken away from men, and they celebrated splendid and festive days. Everything was filled with light, and those who before were downcast beheld each other with smiling faces and beaming eyes. With dances and hymns, in city and country, they glorified first of all God the universal King, because they had been thus taught, and then the pious emperor with his God-beloved children. There was oblivion of past evils and forgetfulness of every deed of impiety; there was enjoyment of present benefits and expectation of those yet to come. Edicts full of clemency and laws containing tokens of benevolence and true piety were issued in every place by the victorious emperor. Thus after all tyranny had been purged away, the empire which belonged to them was preserved firm and without a rival for Constantine and his sons alone. And having obliterated the godlessness of their predecessors, recognizing the benefits conferred upon them by God, they exhibited their love of virtue and their love of God, and their piety and gratitude to the Deity, by the deed which they performed in the sight of all men.

naval forces. For reasons unknown, Constantine ordered his execution in 326.

The Christian Empire



51 ▼ THE THEODOSIAN CODE

All Roman emperors from Constantine onward were baptized Christians, and most were generous patrons of the Church. It was almost an anticlimax when Emperor Theodosius I (r. 379–395) and his two coemperors declared Catholic Christianity to be the imperial state religion in 380.

In 429 Emperor Theodosius II (r. 408–450), ruler of the eastern half of the empire, commissioned a panel of jurists to arrange systematically all imperial edicts from the reign of Constantine I to his time. In 438 they produced *The Theodosian Code*. The code, whose laws span the period from 313 to 437, provides a panoramic view of the first century of imperial Christianity.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. According to the edicts of February 380 and May 391, what is the status of heretical Christians — those who do not accept the *orthodox* (correctly taught) form of Christianity?
2. Compare the legal status of Jews and pagans by the end of the fourth century. Which group was tolerated? Can you infer why? How would you characterize this toleration?
3. Compare the legal treatment of Jews and heretics. Which group was better treated? Which group presented more of a perceived threat to imperial authority and the faith? Why?
4. How did the emperors treat the Christian clergy? Can you think of any reasons for this policy?
5. Compare Asoka's edicts in favor of the Law of Righteousness (Chapter 5, source 37) with these laws. What does this comparative exercise lead you to infer about these two societies?

THE IMPERIAL CHURCH

Edict to the people of the Constantinopolitan city.

All peoples, whom the moderation of our Clemency rules, we wish to be engaged in that religion, which the divine Peter,¹ the apostle, is declared — by the religion which has descended even to the present from him — to have transmitted to the Romans and which, it is clear the pontiff² Damasus³ and Peter, bishop of Alexandria,⁴ a man of apostolic sanctity, follow: this is, that according to apostolic discipline⁵ and evangelic doctrine⁶ we should believe the sole Deity of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit under an equal Majesty and under a pious Trinity.⁷

We order those following this law to assume the name of Catholic⁸ Christians, but the rest, since we judge them demented and insane, to sustain the infamy of heretical dogma and their conventicles⁹ not to take the name of churches, to be smitten first by divine vengeance, then also by the punishment of our authority, which we have claimed in accordance with the celestial will.

[February 28, 380]

¹Saint Peter (d. ca. 64 or 67), the leader of the Twelve Apostles and presumed first bishop of Rome (see note 3).

²A Christian high priest; as a title, it is reserved for bishops (note 3) and their superiors.

³Damasus I, bishop of Rome (r. 366–384). In the course of the late first and early second centuries, the office of *bishop* emerged. Whereas the first Christian communities were ruled by groups of *presbyters*, or elders (source 49, note 8), now each Christian community was under the authority of a single bishop, who was assisted by a body of elders. By the end of the fourth century, the bishop of Rome claimed a special status among all bishops by virtue of the claim that Peter, Prince of the Apostles, had established the bishopric of Rome and had passed on his authority to each succeeding bishop of Rome. The bishops of Rome also claimed the title of *papa* (father), or *pope*.

⁴Peter II (r. 373–381). The bishop of Alexandria was one of the most honored leaders in the Church by virtue of the importance of the city of Alexandria and also because tradition traced the Church of Alexandria's foundation to Saint Mark, disciple of Saint Peter. Like the bishop of Rome, he claimed the title of *papa*, or pope.

⁵According to the practices of the apostles.

HERETICS

Those who shall have betrayed the holy faith and shall have profaned holy baptism¹⁰ should be segregated from all persons' association, should be debarred from testifying,¹¹ should not have . . . the making of a will, should succeed to no one in an inheritance, should be written by no one as heirs.

And these also we should have commanded to be banished to a distance and to be removed rather far away, if it had not seemed to be a greater penalty for them to dwell among men and to lack men's approbation.

But they never shall return to their previous status, the shame of their conduct shall not be obliterated by penitence and shall not be concealed by any shade of elaborate defense or protection, since things which are fabricated and fashioned cannot protect indeed those who have polluted the faith which they had vowed to God and who, betraying the divine mystery,¹² have turned to profanations. And indeed for the lapsed¹³ and the errant¹⁴ there is help, but for the lost — that is, the profaners of holy baptism — there is no aid through any remedy of

⁶According to the faith as revealed in the Gospels.

⁷Here Theodosius I and his coemperors reject the teaching of a group of Christians known as *Arians*. The Arians, led by a priest of Alexandria named Arius, maintained that Jesus was God only by adoption and was not equal in majesty or nature to God the Father. The majority of the Church accepted the doctrine of the *Holy Trinity*, which recognizes three separate and equal divine persons in a single, indivisible God: God the Father, the Creator; God the Son (Jesus), the Redeemer; God the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier.

⁸*Catholic* means "universal." Here it means the Church of the entire empire.

⁹Secret religious meeting places.

¹⁰It is not clear if this condemnation extended to all heretics, who profaned their baptism (the rite through which they were initiated into the Church) by their heresy, or only those heretics who insisted on rebaptizing persons who had previously been baptized as orthodox Catholic Christians.

¹¹In a court of law.

¹²The sacrament of baptism.

¹³Those who no longer practice the faith but are not heretics.

¹⁴Non-Christians.

penitence, which is wont to be available for other crimes.

[May 11, 391]

We order the heretics' polluted contagions to be driven from cities, to be ejected from villages, and the communities not at all to be available for any meetings, lest in any place a sacrilegious company of such persons should be collected. Neither public meeting places to their perversity nor more hidden retreats to their errors should be granted.

[May 19, 391]

PAGANS

We ordain that none may have the liberty of approaching any shrine or temple whatever or of performing abominable sacrifices at any place or time whatever.

[August 7, 391]

JEWES

Governors of provinces should forbid Jews, in a certain ceremony of their festival Aman¹⁵ for remembrance of a former punishment, to ignite and to burn for contempt of the Christian faith with sacrilegious mind a simulated appearance of the Holy Cross¹⁶ lest they should connect our faith's sign with their sports; but they should retain their rites without contempt of the Christian law,¹⁷ because without doubt they shall lose privileges previously permitted to them, unless they shall have abstained from illicit acts.

[May 29, 408]

¹⁵The feast of Purim, which commemoratès the deliverance of Persian Jews from the evil designs of Haman, a fifth-century B.C.E. Persian official.

¹⁶Haman was hung for his machinations. In celebrating the feast, Jews burned an effigy of Haman suspended from a gallows which vaguely resembled a cross.

No one, on the ground that he is a Jew, when he is innocent, should be condemned nor any religion whatsoever should cause a person to be exposed to contumely.¹⁸

Their synagogues or habitations should not be burned indiscriminately or should not be damaged wrongfully without any reason, since, moreover, even if anyone should be implicated in crimes, yet the vigor of the law-courts and the protection of the public law appear to have been established in our midst, lest anyone should have the power to venture on vengeance for himself.

But as we desire this to be provided for the persons of the Jews, so we decree also that the following warning ought to be made: that Jews perchance should not become insolent and, elated by their own security, should not commit anything rash against reverence for the Christian worship.

[August 6, 412 or 418]

THE CLERGY

Pursuant to his own duty a judge shall be bound to observe that, if there should be an appeal to an episcopal court,¹⁹ silence should be applied²⁰ and that, if anyone shall have wished to transfer a matter to the Christian law and to observe that sort of court, he should be heard, even if the matter has been begun before the judge. . . .

[June 23, 318]

Whoever devote to divine worship the services of religion, that is, those who are called clergymen, should be excused entirely from all public services, lest through certain persons' sacrilegious malice they should be diverted from divine services.

[October 21, 319]

¹⁷The Christian religion.

¹⁸Abuse.

¹⁹A bishop's court.

²⁰The civil judge cannot object.

The Christian Emperor



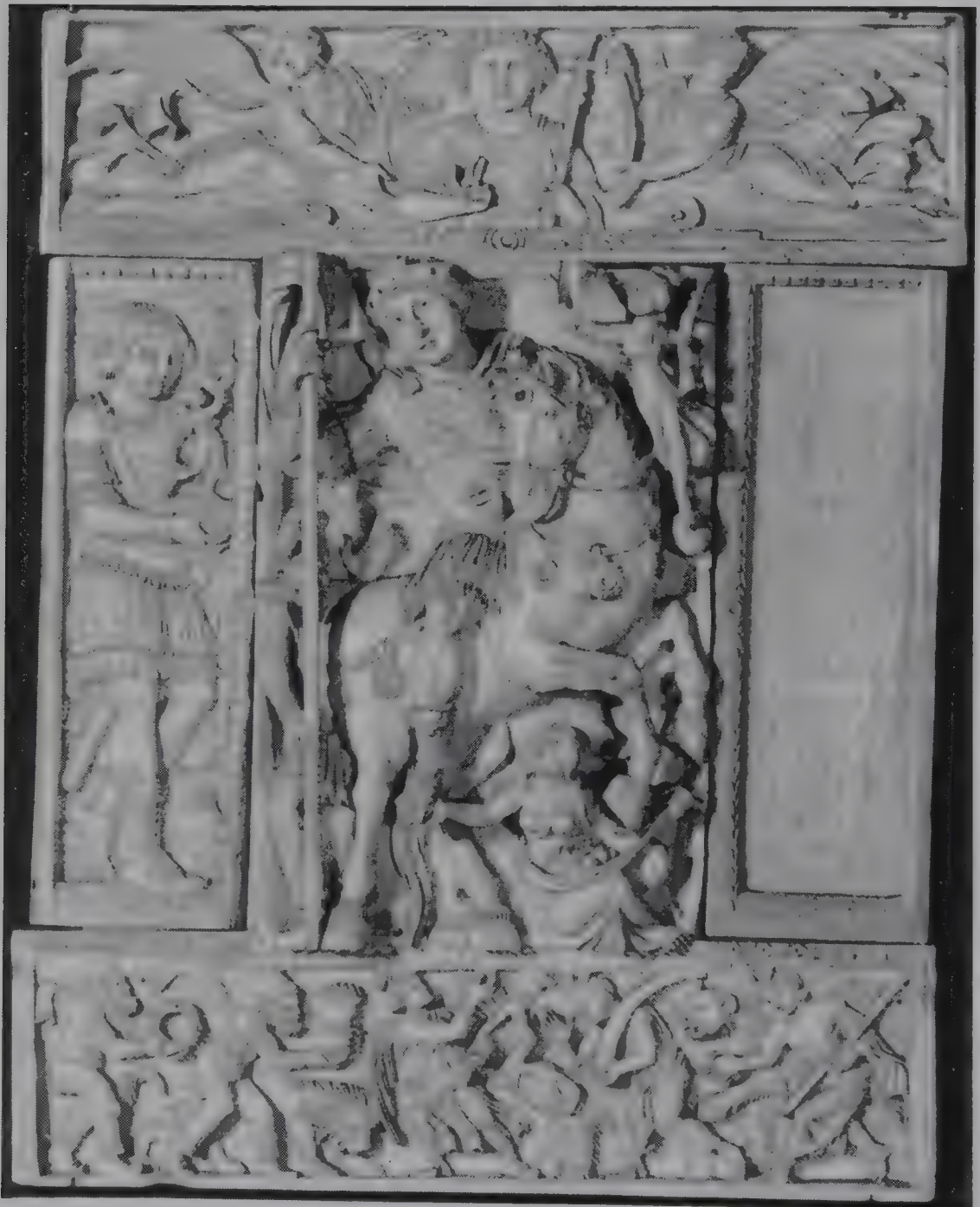
52 ▼ THE BARBERINI IVORY

Roman society consistently perceived its emperors as embodiments of the might of Roman sacred authority and of the divinely ordained destiny that Virgil had celebrated in the *Aeneid*. For this reason, since the days of Caesar Augustus, the Romans allowed the inhabitants of the empire's eastern provinces to revere the emperors as living gods, and even in the West, where divine kingship was not a well-rooted tradition, Romans deified their early emperors once they had shed the coils of mortal life. As a means of reinstituting public belief in the power and destiny of Rome amidst the crises of the third century, later Roman emperors went even further and instituted an empirewide cult of emperor worship, in which they claimed divinity and demanded public worship. Christian refusal to participate in these ceremonies played a major role in inciting Emperor Diocletian and his colleagues to institute the Great Persecution in 303. A few years later, however, Constantine the Great embraced Christianity, which worshiped only one god-man — Jesus Christ. How was the new Christian Empire to treat the emperor?

A sixth-century sculptural masterpiece known as the *Barberini Ivory* (named after later owners of the work) gives us insight into the way in which the Christian Roman World perceived its emperors. The sculpture consists of five interlocking panels and was probably crafted in *Constantinople*, the *New Rome* on the Bosphorus that Constantine I had made the capital of the reunited empire (see Chapter 10). The carving portrays either Emperor Anastasius I (r. 491–518) or Emperor Justinian (r. 527–565) receiving the submission of various barbarian peoples. The triumphant emperor emerges on horseback out of the panel, while a female personification of Earth supports his right foot. Beneath the horse's hooves, Asiatic *Scythians* and Indians, led by a winged female spirit of Victory, offer tokens of submission. The Scythians, who no longer existed as an identifiable people, represented all of the pastoral peoples of Inner Asia who dwelt beyond the Black Sea. Behind the lance that the emperor holds, a soldier dressed in Scythian garments raises his hand in surrender. Farther to the emperor's right, a Roman general approaches, bearing a statuette of the spirit of Victory, who herself carries a laurel crown. A third winged Victory hovers over the mane of the emperor's horse. Crowning the whole composition is a bust of a youthful, beardless Christ in majesty, flanked by two angels. Within the *nimbus*, or halo, that surrounds Christ are symbols for the sun, the moon, and the stars. The Constantinopolitan artist has preserved Greco-Roman naturalism, particularly in regard to the bodies of humans and animals, and has also retained several traditional pagan symbols and motifs, such as the allegorical figures of Earth and Victory. At the same time, as we see in the figures of Christ and his flanking angels, the sculptor has transformed certain pre-Christian artistic types into figures representing Christian beliefs. This adaptation was certainly not new. Christians had been adapting pagan artistic conventions to their own needs since the first century, and by the sixth century, such *Christ in Majesty* scenes as we see at the top of the panel were quite common.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. How do we know that the figures on the bottom left of the panel (our right) represent Indians?
2. What message is implied by portraying peoples from lands that lay outside of the empire?
3. What is the overall message of this sculpture? Be as complete as possible in answering this question.



The Barberini Ivory

The Origins of Christian Monasticism



53 ▼ *Saint Ephraem of Edessa,*

THE LIFE OF SAINT MARY THE HARLOT

During the fourth and fifth centuries many pious Christian men and women sought escape from the new Christian-imperial order and what they perceived to be a corrupt and decaying society by going into the wastelands of Egypt, Syria-Palestine, and Anatolia. These *Desert Elders* included such colorful and unconventional characters as Abbot John the Dwarf, Abbot Moses the Black, and Mary the Harlot, the heroine of the present story. Despite their many differences, they shared a number of characteristics. Chief among them was a desire to live the spirit of the Gospels in a totally uncompromising manner.

This flight to the desert became the foundation of Christian monasticism. The first Desert Elders were usually hermits (also known as *anchorites*), who elected to live solitary lives in their desert refuges. The desert oases could support only a limited number of hermitages, however, and in time, many former hermits chose to join together into communities. Those who elected to live communally were known as *cenobites*. By the end of the sixth century, cenobitic communities became the Christian monastic norm, but they never totally displaced hermits. Moreover, the lives and legends of the first desert hermits continued to inspire Christian monasticism through the ages. Whether anchorite or cenobite, Christian monks of every variety have universally claimed that their ways of life continue the tradition of the flight to the desert.

Our source comes from the pen of a Syrian anchorite and scholar, Saint Ephraem of Edessa (d. 373), a friend of the monk Abraham who figures so prominently in this tale. Although Ephraem, much like Abraham, preferred the solitude of his monastic cell to the bustle of the world, late in his life he left his monastic isolation in order to found and preside over a hospital that cared for the victims of a plague that was devastating the region around Edessa, a site located in the southeastern region of modern Turkey. When the plague passed, he returned to his hermitage.

The story that Ephraem tells revolves around two well-known fourth-century holy people, Abraham and his niece Mary. Upon being orphaned, Mary joined her paternal uncle as an anchorite. After twenty years of monastic austerity, Mary was seduced by a monk who visited her uncle under the pretense of seeking religious instruction. In her horror and shame, she fled the hermitage and joined a brothel in a distant city. After several years had passed, Abraham had a vision of where his niece was and left his cell in disguise to rescue her. The rest of the tale illustrates why these eccentric holy people, who were an infinitesimally small percentage of the population, became folk heroes of such magnitude that they, more than any other single group, were responsible for turning Christianity into a mass religion throughout the eastern Mediterranean.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. Mary, when reminded of her former monastic life, suddenly realizes how lonely she is, even though she has left her hermitage for a city. What is Ephraem's message?
2. The desert hermits have often been characterized as self-centered dropouts. Judging from this story, is that how their society perceived them? How did it perceive them?
3. The pre-Christian Greco-Roman World had tended to think and worship in terms of *holy places*, such as temples and natural sites sacred to various deities. During the fourth and fifth centuries, Christian *holy people* — who, it was believed, possessed special powers — began replacing holy spaces as the new focal point of people's religious imagination. How does this story illustrate that development?
4. Compare Abraham's treatment of Mary with the Buddha's treatment of his aunt (Chapter 3, source 20). Which strike you as more pronounced, the parallels or the differences? What do you conclude from your answer?
5. Study this story's treatment of Mary in the light of your answer to question 4 of source 49. What conclusions follow from that comparison?

Abraham went forth to battle the Evil One and, once he had defeated him, to achieve the greater victory of bringing his niece home again. When he arrived at the city, he entered the tavern where she worked as a prostitute and anxiously looked around, glancing this way and that way, hoping to see her. Time went by, and he still had not caught sight of her. Finally, he addressed the innkeeper in a joking manner: "They tell me, my friend," he said, "that you have an excellent 'working girl' here. If it is all right with you, I would like to have a look at her."

The innkeeper . . . replied that everything he had heard was true. She was unusually beautiful. . . . The old man asked her name and was told they called her *Mary*. Beaming merrily, he then said: "Come on, bring her in and show her to me, and let me buy her a fine dinner, for I have heard her praises sung everywhere." So they called her. When she came in and the holy old man saw her in her prostitute's clothes, his entire body came close to collapsing in grief. However, he hid his heartache behind the facade of a cheerful face and heroically held back the tears that welled up in his eyes, lest the young woman recognize him and flee.

As they sat down and drank their wine, this magnificent old man began to joke around with her. She rose, put her arms around his neck, and teased him with kisses. As she was kissing him, she smelled the fragrant austerity that his lean body exuded, and she thought back to the days when she had lived as an ascetic. Struck as though a spear had pierced her soul, she began to weep. Unable to bear the pain in her heart, she cried out: "Ah, the pain at being alone and unhappy."

The innkeeper was amazed and asked: "What is troubling you, Mary, that suddenly you burst out into this sorrowful lament? You have been here two years to the day, and no one in that time ever heard a sigh or sad word from you. I have no idea of what has overcome you."

The young woman replied: "I would have been happy had I died three years ago." . . .

The holy old man then produced the gold coin he had brought with him and gave it to the innkeeper, saying: "Now, friend, make us a good dinner, so that I can have some fun with the young woman. I have come a long distance in my love for her." O divine-like wisdom! O wise understanding of the spirit! O remarkable discretion for the sake of salvation! During fifty

years of abstinence he had never tasted bread; now without hesitation he eats meat to save a lost soul. . . . Marvel at such madness, such a reversal of form, when an upright, wise, discreet, and prudent man becomes a reckless fool in order to snatch a soul from the jaws of the lion, and set free a captive. . . .

Once they had feasted, the young woman began to tease him to come to her room to lie with her. "Let us go," he said. Entering the room, he saw a high bed prepared for them, and immediately he sat on it in a light-hearted manner.

What should I call you, O perfect athlete of Christ?¹ I really do not know. Should I say you are continent or incontinent, wise or foolish, discreet or reckless? During the fifty years of your monastic profession you have slept on a straw mat. How is it that you can so indifferently climb onto such a bed? The long journey with its many stops along the way, your eating meat and drinking wine, your entering a brothel — you have done all of this in order to praise and glorify Christ by saving a soul. On our part, if we have to say one useful word to a neighbor, we are upset by the prospect of the task. . . .

"Come close to me, Mary," said the old man. When she was next to him, he took her by the hand, as though to kiss her. Then taking off his hat, and with a voice cracking with tears, he said: "Mary, my daughter, do you not know me? My heart, was I not the one who raised you? . . . Who was it who destroyed you? Where is that angelic garb you used to wear?² Where is your chastity? Your tears? Your vigils? Your bed on the ground? My daughter, how did you fall from the height of heaven into this pit? Why, when you lapsed into sin, did you not tell me? Why did you not come to me then and there? I would have done your penance for you, so also would have my beloved friend Ephraem.³ Why did you desert me and bring this intolerable sorrow on me? For

who is sinless, except God Himself? . . . Have pity on my old age. Grieve for the burden placed on my white head. I beg you. Get up and come home with me. Do not be afraid. A human is given to slipping, but if one falls down swiftly, one can also rise again swiftly with God's help. God does not desire a sinner's death but, rather, that the sinner is healed and lives."

She replied: "If you are sure that I can do penance and that God will accept my atonement, I will come as you request." . . . And they rose up and went away, . . . and so the blessed Abraham, his heart filled with joy, journeyed along the road with his niece.

When they arrived home, he placed her in the inner cell that had previously been his, and he remained in the outer cell.⁴ She, clad in a hair shirt, resided there in humility of soul, weeping in her heart and through her eyes, disciplining herself with vigils and the stern burden of abstinence . . . ceaselessly calling on God and bewailing her sin but with a sure hope of pardon. . . . And God the compassionate, who desires that no person perishes but that all come to repentance, so accepted her penance that after three years He restored many ill people to health through her prayers. Crowds flocked to her, and she would pray to God for their healing, and her prayers were granted.

The blessed Abraham, after living for another ten years in this earthly life, and seeing her blessed repentance, and giving glory to God, rested in peace in his seventieth year. . . . Mary lived another five years, ever more devoutly disciplining her life and persevering night and day in tearful and sorrowful prayer to God, so that many a person passing by that place at night and hearing her grief-filled voice would be turned to weeping and add his tears to hers. When the hour of her sleeping came, in which she was taken from this life, all that saw her gave glory to God for the look of happiness on her face.

¹Abraham. Monastic ascetics were often called *athletes* because they were involved in painful competition (*agonia* in Greek) for spiritual perfection.

²Her simple, rough-spun monastic robe.

³Probably Ephraem of Edessa.

⁴Originally she had inhabited the outer cell, or room. Being closer to the world, she had fallen into sin. In his greater solitude, Abraham had been unaware of what was happening to Mary and, for several days, was not even aware of her flight. He was now going to be her buffer against the world.

Religious Exchange and Interchange

The Judaic roots of Christianity are quite clear, as sources 48 and 49 illustrate. Less obvious, perhaps, are the influences of late antiquity's mystery religions (Chapter 5, source 34), such as *Gnosticism*, on the development of Christian belief and expression. Equally often overlooked is Christianity's impact on other religions of salvation, most notably *Manichaeism*. As the following sources illustrate, cultural syncretism was a two-way street during Christianity's formative years.

Gnostic Christianity: The Secret Knowledge of Jesus

54 ▼ THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS

In 1945 two Egyptian farmers unearthed a jar containing fifty-two early Christian texts written in Coptic, the common tongue of late ancient Egypt. Known collectively as the *Nag Hammadi Library*, the texts, most of which were previously unknown, shed new light on an important but little understood branch of early Christianity known as the *Gnostics*.

Gnosticism is an all-encompassing term for a widespread, Hellenistic religious philosophy that was based on the belief that salvation is attainable through a secret, mystical knowledge, which is called *gnosis* in Greek. Gnosticism predated Christianity, and it manifested itself in many different varieties. There was no single, all-encompassing Gnostic Church. Rather, there were many different Gnostic sects, most of which were pagan, but there were even Jewish Gnostics. Notwithstanding its largely pagan associations, Gnosticism made inroads into early Christianity and influenced its development. Ultimately rejected as *heretics*, or wrong believers, by the mainstream Christian Church, Gnostic Christians suffered the fate of having their core teachings condemned and their books largely destroyed.

For that reason alone, the discovery of the Nag Hammadi Library excited scholarly interest. Of all the recovered texts, the one that drew the most attention was the *Gospel of Thomas*. Ascribed to the authorship of Jesus' twin brother, the Apostle Judas Thomas, it was composed during the second century C.E. or earlier, possibly about the same time that the Gospel of Saint John, the last of the four canonical, or officially approved, Gospels of the New Testament, was completed. The Gospel of Thomas has no narrative; it simply consists of 113 sayings of Jesus. The reader who knows the four canonical Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John will recognize some familiar passages. Many of the sayings, however, will seem foreign, possibly even strange. Cumulatively, the sayings portray Jesus as a purely spiritual, noncorporeal savior who imparts to a select few a secret wisdom that

will enable them to discover within themselves the divine spark of heavenly light. Although the Gnostic vision did not become mainstream Christian theology, Gnosticism was one of many forces that left a mark on Christianity as it took shape within the late Hellenistic World.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. What does saying 22 seem to say? Does it help to compare it with the statues of *Shiva Nataraja* and *Hevajra* (Chapter 6, sources 43 and 45)?
2. Sayings 49 and 50 are overtly Gnostic. What do they suggest about Gnostic beliefs?
3. What does saying 70 mean? What about saying 75? Compare these sayings with the *Upanishads* (Chapter 3, source 16). What conclusions follow from this comparative analysis?
4. Compare saying 113 with *The Life of St. Mary the Harlot* (source 53). What conclusions do you reach?
5. How and where does one gain this knowledge, or *gnosis*, and how difficult is it to attain it?
6. Compare these sayings with the biblical passages cited in the notes. What do you infer from this comparison?

Prologue

These are the secret sayings that the living Jesus¹ spoke and Judas Thomas the Twin² recorded.

Saying 1

He said, "Whoever finds the interpretation of these sayings will not taste death."

Saying 2

Jesus said, "Let one who seeks not stop seeking until one finds.

When one finds, one will be disturbed.

When one is disturbed, one will be amazed, and will reign over all."

Saying 3

Jesus said, "If your leaders say to you, 'Behold, the kingdom is in the sky,' then the birds in the

sky will get there before you. If they say to you, 'It is in the sea,' then the fish will get there before you.

"Rather, the kingdom is inside you and outside you.³ When you know yourselves, then you will be known, and will understand that you are children of the living Father. But if you do not know yourselves, then you live in poverty, and embody poverty." . . .

Saying 9

Jesus said, "Behold, the sower went out, took a handful of seeds, and scattered them. Some fell on the road, and the birds came and ate them. Others fell on rock, and they did not take root in the soil or produce any heads of grain. Others fell among thorns, and the thorns choked the seeds and worms consumed them. Still others fell on good soil, and brought forth a good crop:

¹Jesus, who offered the life of *gnosis*.

²According to a Syriac Christian tradition, Jesus had a twin brother, Judas Thomas.

³The Kingdom of God begins with knowledge of self and of God.

it yielded sixty per measure and one hundred twenty per measure.”⁴ . . .

Saying 22

Jesus saw some babies nursing. He said to his disciples, “These nursing babies are like those who enter the kingdom.”⁵

They said to him, “Then shall we enter the kingdom as babies?”

Jesus said to them,

“When you make the two into one,
when you make the inner like the outer
and the outer like the inner,
and the upper like the lower,
when you make male and female into a
single one,
so that the male will not be male
and the female will not be female,
when you make eyes replacing an eye,
a hand replacing a hand,
a foot replacing a foot,
and an image replacing an image,

then you will enter the kingdom.” . . .

Saying 36

Jesus said, “Do not worry, from morning to evening and from evening to morning, about what you will wear.”⁶ . . .

Saying 39

Jesus said, “The Pharisees and the scribes have taken the keys to knowledge and have hidden them. They have not entered, nor have they allowed those who want to enter to do so. As for you, be as clever as snakes and as innocent as doves.” . . .

Saying 49

Jesus said,

“Blessed are those who are alone and chosen:

you will find the kingdom.

For you have come from it, and you will return there again.”

Saying 50

Jesus said, “If some say to you, ‘Where have you come from?’ say to them, ‘We have come from the light,

where the light came into being by itself,
established itself,

and appeared in an image of light.’

“If they say to you, ‘Are you the light?’ say,

‘We are its children,

and we are the chosen of the living Father.’

“If they ask you, ‘What is the evidence of your Father in you?’ tell them,

‘It is motion and rest.’” . . .

Saying 54

Jesus said,

“Blessed are the poor:

yours is the kingdom of heaven.”⁷ . . .

Saying 58

Jesus said,

“Blessed is one who has suffered:

that one has found life.”⁸ . . .

Saying 68

Jesus said,

“Blessed are you when you are hated and
persecuted,

and no one will discover the place where
you have been persecuted.”

Saying 69

Jesus said,

“Blessed are those who have been persecuted
in their hearts:

they truly know the Father.

⁴Compare this with Matthew, 13:3–9; Mark, 4:3–9; and Luke, 8:5–8.

⁵Compare this with Matthew, 18:1–5; Mark, 9:33–37; and Luke, 9:46–48; also compare Matthew, 19:13–15; Mark, 10:13–16; and Luke, 18:15–17.

⁶Compare this with the Sermon on the Mount.

⁷Compare this with the Sermon on the Mount.

⁸Compare this with the Sermon on the Mount.

“Blessed are those who are hungry,
for the stomach of the famished will be
filled.”⁹

Saying 70

Jesus said,

“If you bring forth what is within you,
what you have will save you.

If you do not have that within you,
what you do not have within you will
kill you.” . . .

Saying 75

Jesus said,

“I am the light that is over all things.
I am all:

all came forth from me,
and all attained to me.

Split a piece of wood,
and I am there.

Pick up a stone,
and you will find me there.” . . .

Saying 113

Simon Peter¹⁰ said to them, “Let Mary¹¹ leave
us, because women are not worthy of life.”

Jesus said, “Behold, I shall guide her so as to
make her male, that she too may become a liv-
ing spirit like you men.¹² For every woman who
makes herself male will enter the kingdom of
heaven.”

⁹Compare sayings 68 and 69 with the Sermon on the Mount.

¹⁰The Apostle Peter (see source 51, notes 1 and 3). Prior to
being given the name *Peter* (Greek for *rock*) by Jesus, his
name was Simon.

¹¹Several of Jesus' closest and most loyal female friends were

named Mary. This might refer to *Mary Magdalene*, one of
Jesus' inner circle of followers.

¹²The male (heavenly) principle must replace totally the
female (earthly) principle.

Manichaeism: Enlightening the World



55 ▼ THE PARABLE ABOUT THE WORLD-OCEAN

Gnosticism and mainstream Christianity parted ways, but the Gnostic search for spiritual knowledge did not end there. In the third century C.E. a Persian prophet from Babylonia named *Mani* (216–276) founded a Gnostic religion that claimed a worldwide mission. Drawing deeply from Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, and Zoroastrian sources, Mani articulated a *Religion of Light* whose message was aimed not at a small group of select initiates but at all of humanity. Indeed, *Manichaeism* became a major world religion, despite attempts to suppress it. Initially Manichaeism made major inroads into the Greco-Roman World, but the Christian Roman Empire fought back and essentially ousted this Gnostic faith from the West before the sixth century was over. Manichaeism likewise enjoyed early success in Mesopotamia and Iran, but persecution by the Zoroastrian Sassanid Empire and the later triumph of Islam combined to produce a similar eclipse of Manichaeism in the land of its birth.

Regardless of these setbacks, Manichaeism did not die an early death. It traveled east along the Silk Road, making deep inroads in Central Asia and gaining a firm foothold in China, where it proved to be a strong rival to Buddhism and lasted into early modern times. By the late seventeenth century, however, very few living vestiges of Manichaeism remained in Central and East Asia, but certainly it had enjoyed a long life in those areas touched by the eastern portions of

the Silk Road. This longevity was due in large part to Manichaeism missionaries who were willing and able to take this religion, which had sprung largely from Christian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian roots, and translate it into terms understandable to Central and East Asians. For example, Manichaeism's *Jesus the Messiah*, a savior who will return to Earth, became identified with the Buddha Maitreya, a Mahayana Buddha of the future.

Babylonia was a religiously complex region in the third century. The fact that Mani was raised in a Gnostic Christian sect that maintained strong connections with Judaism hints at the religious syncretism that pervaded Mesopotamia. At age twenty-four Mani began his public preaching. Claiming direct revelation from *Jesus of Light*, the divine, supreme revealer of the truth of the Light, Mani maintained that his revelation completed that of three predecessors who had preached true religion: the Buddha, Zoroaster, and Jesus the Messiah, a fully divine historical being who was separate from Jesus of Light.

The essence of Mani's teaching was that there are two coeternal and coequal principles, Light and Darkness: *Light* is harmony and peace; *Darkness* is disorder and strife. Originally separated from one another, Light and Darkness came into conflict when Darkness attempted to possess Light for itself. Darkness's swallowing of part of the realm of Light led to the creation of the universe and humanity, in whom sparks of divine Light reside within bodies that are ruled by Darkness. Humanity is now called upon to take part in the cosmic struggle. Once all the lost Light is recovered, Darkness will be reduced to impotence, Light will reign supreme, and the universe will end.

The following document was written in the language of the people of the Central Asiatic state that the Chinese knew as *Kangju* and the Greco-Roman West called *Sogdiana* — a steppe kingdom located southeast of the Aral Sea. Sogdian merchants who traveled the Silk Road, once the silk trade had resumed in the sixth century, proved to be especially fervent missionaries of Manichaeism, which they introduced to Turkish tribes far to the east. One such tribe was the *Uighurs*, who moved from the Mongolian steppes to the oasis towns along the branch of the Silk Road that skirted the northern fringes of the forbidding Taklamakan Desert (also called the Tarim Basin). In the mid ninth century the Uighurs established a partially Manichaean state centered on the caravan city of Turfan, and it was probably there that some Uighur scribe copied this text, which was discovered at Turfan in the early twentieth century.

The text takes the form of a *parable*, or extended metaphor. In it Mani's revelation is likened to the world-ocean into which all other rivers (previous religions) flow. If we read the parable carefully, we can discover several of Manichaeism's more important doctrines. Please note that words in parentheses are editorial explanations; words in brackets have been supplied by the editor to fill in the broken text.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. According to the parable, is salvation possible outside of the Manichaean Church?

2. What does the Manichaeian Church demand of all its members?
3. What is especially demanded of the *elect*?
4. Which of these articles reveal(s) the Gnostic elements within Manichaeism?
5. What is the daily work of the Manichaeian Church?

And the wonderful Religion of the Apostle [is similar] to the world-ocean [in ten ways].

First: It is wise (full of wisdom), and no one knows nor can estimate its wisdom . . . , nor the quantity and [number] of its sermons and explanations; and no one can comprehend it. The former religions are similar to the small waters which arise in [different places]. . . . [But] the religion of the Apostles which [is similar] to the great world-ocean can be [seen] in the whole world and in every place. And it is ripe to be presented in [the darkness] in a most open manner and to be proclaimed in all languages. And [one can] find the explanation and systematization (?) of all wisdom in it.

Second: The other shore that no one [knows] is the fragrant, wonderful Paradise that the living beings [on earth], apart from the elect and the [auditors],¹ do not perceive and will never comprehend.

Third: The [waters] of the world-ocean have one taste, and the other waters have different tastes and appearances, but its own taste does not change. That is [the] deep wisdom of the Law and the commandments of the Religion, and the sweet, wonderful words that are preached. The fine parables and [their] explanations [and] interpretations, the rich and wholly pure [practice] of [its] mode of life, the noble exercise of its good customs, the humble . . . change of mind which the Religion shows (suggests) to [men], teaching and instructing (them). . . . But it itself has not been instructed by anyone in anything.

Fourth: The world-ocean absorbs the bodies . . . and does not reject anyone. These are the mighty [spirits?] and men; and [whoever] of these comes to the Church of the Apostle is absorbed [by the Church], for it does not reject anyone. Rather, according to the order of its Law and commandments, it gives them their [places]. And as many as approach it [repeatedly], in order to enter it, [all] of them have their places either amongst the auditors or the elect. And they all do their works according to their rank, their zeal and their strength. And [the Religion] does not make . . . and honor . . . , and out of love it does not shout out loud. And however many of these people may be mighty, nothing takes it by surprise, nor does it rejoice, for it remains placid and tranquil at all times. [Thus] it is like the world-ocean.

Fifth: The Religion of the Apostle [is] without stain, (being) clean and pure and holy; and it immediately refuses to retain those men who are confused and immoral and [have] filthy thoughts, men who are like corpses, excrements and diverse (forms of) pollution. It tosses them back onto the shore.

Sixth: When an elect one sees another elect one face to face, or an auditor sees [another] auditor, then the pure, loving gaze gives rise to great joy among them. And [so] great blessing comes upon them, and like light it appears in the faces of the light gods and becomes visible.

Seventh: The many great, strong bipeds and otherwise fashioned wonderful beings and animals [that are born] in the world-ocean are [like]

¹The Manichaeian Church divided its members into the *elect* and the *auditors*, or hearers. The elect were the chosen few who led lives of great asceticism and provided leadership in the Church. Because of their purity they were the earthly agents for the release of captive Light. The hearers were the mass of Manichaeian believers who served the elect. Whereas

the soul of the elect returns directly to the Kingdom of Light upon death, the soul of the hearer must still go through a series of reincarnations, first in a series of luminous fruits and then in the form of an elect. How soon this last incarnation happens depends on the quality of the hearer's service to the elect.

the elect that behave quite differently from the world. And [they] bear the burden and the heavy load of the Law and endure great pain and suffering. And they always accept personally, what no man in the whole world would bear or take upon himself.

Eighth: In the world-ocean, . . . varied priceless pearls and beautiful, miraculous jewels are born which are not born in [any] deep [place] (in the earth). Never can this be comprehended and never can it be seen. This reflects the difference between the two places, the good and the evil one, and the self-realization of the soul which is not born in a learned place.² It (that wisdom) can never be attained except in [the Religion] and in the Law and in the commandments of the Apostle.

Ninth: The strong one³ and the demon⁴ of the world-ocean that shakes the whole world-ocean when it rises (in the tide) is the Nous⁵ of the Religion, which is in the [whole] Church, shaking the bodies (of men). It (the Nous) seizes

(them) mightily and draws out [the light] (they have accumulated), this being the daily work (of the men) of the Religion. [That light] ascends daily from the whole body of the elect to the light [chariots] (the Sun and the Moon); and the gods in command of these chariots draw it up [and] constantly send it on to the world of Paradise.

Tenth: All roaring and thundering waters that flow into the ocean, that then become still and stop roaring, are the adherents of [other] religions and men of worldly wisdom [and] eloquent men who remain [mere] creators of words, believing themselves to be wise. But when they come to the door of the Religion of the Apostle, they all become silent and their (own) words silence them. And now they do [not] exalt themselves (any more), and henceforth they do not dare to make any more speeches [and] dare not say anything.

[Here] ends the story about the Religion and the world-ocean.

²Worldly learning stands in contrast to the knowledge of the soul that one receives from the Manichaean religion.

³A metaphorical term for the *tide*.

⁴According to Manichaean cosmology, the tide, or *ocean giant*, arises as a consequence of demonic substances poured into the ocean. This is positive, however, because the turbulence purifies the waters of the ocean.

⁵A Greek term that means *Divine Intelligence*. *Nous* is an emanation of Jesus of Light and carries out his redemptive role. *Nous* is the father of all true religious leaders and enters the world through their teachings. It is *Nous* that imparts knowledge of the divine origin of the soul, and this knowledge brings with it liberation from Darkness.

Chapter 8

Islam

Universal Submission to God

The last of the great monotheistic faiths to arise in Southwest Asia was Islam, which emerged in Arabia during the early seventh century. *Islam* means “submission” in Arabic, and a *Muslim* is anyone who submits to the Will of God.

The Prophet of Islam was a merchant of Mecca known as *Muhammad ibn (son of) Abdullab* (ca. 571–632), who around 610 began to receive visions in which he was called to be the Messenger of *Allab* — a divinity whose Arabic name (al-Llah) means “*the* God.” Muhammad’s mission was to preach the Oneness of God (“there is no god but the God”), the imminence of the Resurrection of the Dead, the coming of a divine Day of Judgment, and the existence of an all-consuming hell fire for the unjust and unbelievers and a paradise of bliss for the faithful. Muhammad believed that, just as Jews and Christians had their divine revelations from God, now the Arabs were receiving the full and final word of God through him, the last and greatest of the prophets but still only a man. Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and the other prophets had been earlier messengers of God. Muhammad was the *seal* of these fore-runners.

Most Meccans, including almost all of his own kinsmen, were initially unmoved by Muhammad’s message, so in 622 Muhammad and the majority of his small band of converts journeyed over two hundred miles northeast to an oasis settlement that would become known as *Medinat al-Nabi* (City of the Prophet) or, more simply, *Medina*. By this act, known as the *hijra* (breaking of ties), these first Muslims abandoned their tribal bonds — bonds that defined traditional Arabic society — and opted for membership in an Islamic community of faith, or *umma*. This migration was so pivotal in the history of Islam that Muslims later chose the year 622 to mark the beginning of the era of Islam — the Year 1 of the Islamic calendar.

It was at Medina that circumstances forced Muhammad to add the duties of statesman and warrior to that of prophet, and he proved successful at all three. After more than seven years of struggle, Muhammad and a reputed ten thousand followers were able to enter Mecca in triumph in January 630. The Messenger of Allah was now the most powerful chieftain in Arabia, and most of the tribes of the peninsula soon were united under his leadership. When Muhammad died in 632, his closest friend, *Abu Bakr*, assumed the title and office of *caliph* (deputy of the Prophet), thereby accepting leadership over the family of Islam. Abu Bakr did not claim to be a prophet; God's revelation had ceased with Muhammad's death. As caliph, Abu Bakr served as head of the umma — the community of God's people. Thanks to Abu Bakr's efforts at destroying secessionist elements that arose after Muhammad's death, Islam under his stewardship (632–634) remained a unified community ready to explode out of its homeland, which it did under the second caliph, Umar (r. 634–644).

Both the Sassanian Persian and Byzantine empires had exhausted each other in a series of destructive wars that ran from 503 to 627. In addition, the Byzantine Empire was rent by ethnic and religious dissension, especially in Syria-Palestine and Egypt. So, when Muslims began raiding the territories of these neighboring empires, they discovered lands ripe for conquest. Before Umar's death the Byzantines had lost all of Syria-Palestine and Egypt to the green flag of Islam, and the Arab conquest of the Sassanian Empire was virtually completed. By 750 lands under Islamic domination reached from the Pyrenees and Atlantic coast in Spain to the Indus Valley of India and Tang China's far-western borders.

Originally the Arabs considered Islam their special revelation and had little or no intention of sharing the faith with their non-Arab subjects, but several factors combined to attract large numbers of converts. These included Islam's uncompromising monotheism and the straightforwardness of its other central doctrines; the psychic and social security offered by membership in a totally integrated Muslim community, where one's entire life is subject to God's Word; and the desire to escape the second-class status of Islam's non-Muslim subjects. When the Abbasid caliphs (r. 750–1258) established their court at Baghdad on the Tigris in 762, they claimed dominion over a multiethnic ecumene bound together by one of the most attractive and fastest growing religions in the history of humanity. The culture of this world community was a combination of many different elements,

of which the most important were Arabic, Persian, and Hellenistic.

Later other peoples, especially the Turks, would convert to Islam and carry it farther afield, especially into the heart of India and deep into Central Asia. Arab and East African merchants would transport the faith across the Indian Ocean to the ports of Southeast Asia, and Berbers from North Africa would introduce Islam into western sub-Saharan Africa.

The Foundations of Islamic Life

Like the Buddha and Jesus, Muhammad was a teacher who spoke rather than wrote his message, but also like Buddhism and Christianity, following its Messenger's death, Islam quickly became a religious culture centered on a body of sacred texts, and it has remained so to the present. Islam's text without equal is the *Qur'an* (the Recitations), which Muslims believe contains, word for word, absolutely everything that God revealed to Muhammad and nothing else. As the full and final revelation of God, the *Qur'an* encompasses all that any human needs to know. Its verses, each a poetically perfect proclamation from Heaven, are both doctrine and law, governing essentially every aspect of a Muslim's life. Islam without the *Qur'an* is unimaginable.

A second source of guidance for most Muslims is *al-Hadith* (Tradition), a vast body of transmitted stories and sayings attributed to the Prophet and his Companions. Unlike the *Qur'an*, these stories, individually known as *hadiths* (tales or instructions), are not assembled in a single, absolutely accepted text. Rather, there are many collections of Hadith, some more authoritative than others, some even largely dismissed as spurious. The majority of Muslims believe that authentic hadiths enshrine the *sunna* (the beaten track), or valid traditions, of the Prophet and the first Islamic community and thereby provide perfect models for behavior in all aspects of life, especially those not expressly covered in the precepts of the *Qur'an*.

A third source that provides inspiration and guidance is the earliest extant biography of the Prophet of God. Because Muslims regard Muhammad as only a man, Islam has no Gospels in the sense that Christianity does — divinely inspired and infallible accounts of its Teacher's miracles and salvific deeds. Islam, however, does have the recorded remembrances of the Messenger of God's Companions from Mecca and his earliest converts at Medina, which document portions of Muhammad's life and his fully human deeds. Collected and arranged into a coherent biography in eighth-century Baghdad, this work has served through the centuries as a model for devout Muslims who desire to follow the path of Allah's perfect servant.

Like the Jewish Torah, the *Qur'an* provides its believers with a total way of life. The dichotomy between Church and state that the European West developed

has no meaning in Islam, at least as it emerged in the seventh century. Indeed, Islam has no Church in the Christian sense, and it has no separate secular polity — at least in the ideal. In the ideal, there is only God's *umma*, which is governed by God's Holy Law, or *Shari'a*. The study and application of *Shari'a* is one of the highest callings in Islamic life and stands at the center of its civilization.

The Word of God



56 ▼ THE QUR'AN

As long as the Prophet was alive, there was no compelling reason to set his messages down in some definitive form. However, following Muhammad's death in 632, Caliph Abu Bakr ordered one of the Prophet's Companions, Zayd ibn Thabit, to collect from both oral and written sources all of Muhammad's inspired utterances. Subsequently, Caliph Uthman (r. 644–656) promulgated an official collection of these Recitations and ordered all other versions destroyed.

This standard text became the basis of every pious Muslim's education. As Islam spread beyond Arab ethnic boundaries, Muslims all over the world continued to learn Arabic in order to study and recite (usually from memory) the sacred *surahs* (chapters) of this holy book. Because of the Qur'an's centrality to Islam, Arabic literacy became the hallmark of Muslims from sub-Saharan West Africa to South-east Asia.

The following excerpts come from the third of the Qur'an's 114 surahs, *The House of Imran*. Islam reveres the memory of two men named *Imran*: the father of Moses, the prophet to whom Allah gave the Torah, the sacred book and law of the Jews; and the father of Mary, the mother of Jesus. The term *the House of Imran* as used in this surah refers to the families of both prophets.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. What evidence is there that Muhammad was experiencing difficulty converting Jewish and Christian Arabs?
2. How does the Qur'an portray Jews and Christians, and what is Islam's relationship with these two faiths?
3. Do you see any parallels between this text and that of the Bible's Jewish and Christian Testaments? What do you infer from your answer?
4. What basic Islamic beliefs are reflected in this excerpt?
5. How does Islam differ from Judaism and Christianity?
6. How are Muslims to deal with nonbelievers? With those who attack them?

God
there is no god but He, the
Living, the Everlasting.

He has sent down upon thee the Book
with the truth, confirming what was before it,
and He sent down the Torah¹ and the Gospel²
aforetime, as guidance to the people,
and He sent down the Salvation.

As for those who disbelieve in God's signs, for
them awaits a terrible chastisement; God is
All-mighty, Vengeful.

From God nothing whatever is hidden
in heaven and earth. It is He who forms you
in the womb as He will. There is no god but
He,
the All-mighty, the All-wise.

It is He who sent down upon thee the Book,³
wherein are verses clear that are the Essence
of the Book. . . .

Our Lord, make not our hearts to swerve
after that Thou hast guided us; and give us
mercy from Thee;
Thou art the Giver.

Our Lord, it is Thou that shall gather
mankind for a day whereon is no doubt;
verily God will
not fail the tryst.⁴ . . .

The true religion with God is Islam.
Those who were given the Book⁵ were not at
variance
except after the knowledge came to them,
being insolent one to another.⁶ And whoso

disbelieves in God's signs, God is swift
at the reckoning.
So if they dispute with thee, say: 'I have
surrendered my will to God, and whosoever
follows me.'

And say to those who have been given the
Book⁷
and to the common folk: 'Have you
surrendered?'

If they have surrendered, they are right
guided;
but if they turn their backs, thine it is only
to deliver the Message; and God
sees His servants.⁸

Those who disbelieve in the signs of God
and slay the Prophets without right,
and slay such men as bid to justice —
do thou give them the good tidings of
a painful chastisement;
their works have failed in this world and the
next;
they have no helpers.

Hast thou not regarded those who were given
a portion of the Book, being called to the Book
of God, that it might decide between them,
and then a party of them turned away,
swerving aside?

That, because they said, 'The Fire shall not
touch us, except for a number of days';
and the lies they forged have deluded them
in their religion.

But how will it be, when We⁹ gather them
for a day whereon is no doubt, and every soul
shall be paid in full what it has earned, and
they
shall not be wronged?

¹The Law — the first five books of the *Tanakh* (the Jewish Bible). See Chapter 6, source 46, and Chapter 7, source 49.

²Chapter 7, source 48.

³All three books of revelation: the Qur'an, the Gospels, and the Torah.

⁴God's covenant with humanity.

⁵Jews and Christians who respectively received from God the Torah and the Gospels.

⁶Through sheer insolence, especially toward one another, Jews and Christians strayed from the path of God's revelation.

⁷Jews and Christians.

⁸God knows who are His submissive servants.

⁹God.

Say: 'O God, Master of the Kingdom,
Thou givest the Kingdom to whom Thou wilt,
and seizest the kingdom from whom Thou
wilt,

Thou exaltest whom Thou wilt, and Thou
abasest whom Thou wilt; in Thy hand
is the good; Thou art powerful
over everything.

Thou makest the night to enter into the day
and Thou makest the day to enter into the
night,

Thou bringest forth the living from the dead
and Thou bringest forth the dead from the
living,
and Thou providest whomsoever Thou wilt
without reckoning.' . . .

Say: 'If you love God, follow me, and God
will love you, and forgive you your sins;
God is All-forgiving, All-compassionate.'
Say: 'Obey God, and the Messenger.'¹⁰ But
if they turn their backs, God loves not
the unbelievers.

God chose Adam and Noah
and the House of Abraham
and the House of Imran¹¹
above all beings, the
seed of one another;
God hears, and knows.

When the wife of Imran¹²
said, 'Lord, I have vowed
to Thee, in dedication,
what is within my womb.
Receive Thou this from me;
Thou hearest, and knowest.'
And when she gave birth to her

she said, 'Lord, I have given
birth to her, a female.'
(And God knew very well
what she had given birth to;
the male is not as the female.)
'And I have named her Mary,
and commend her to Thee
with her seed, to protect them
from the accursed Satan.'
Her Lord received the child
with gracious favor. . . .

When the angels said,
'Mary, God gives thee good
tidings of a Word¹³ from Him
whose name is Messiah,¹⁴
Jesus, son of Mary;
high honored shall he be
in this world and the next,
near stationed to God.
He shall speak to men
in the cradle, and of age,
and righteous he shall be.'
'Lord,' said Mary,
'how shall I have a son
seeing no mortal has
touched me?'¹⁵ Even so,
God said, 'God
creates what He will.

When He decrees a thing
He does but say to it
"Be," and it is.
And He will teach him
the Book, the Wisdom,
the Torah, the Gospel,
to be a Messenger
to the Children of Israel
saying, "I have come to

¹⁰Muhammad.

¹¹Moses and his brother Aaron (Musā and Harun in Arabic).

¹²This clearly is the second Imran, the father of Mary.

¹³*Logos* in Greek; it is a term used by Christians to describe Jesus Christ, the Living Word of God. Christians believe

that the Logos is coeternal and codivine with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit.

¹⁴Hebrew for "the Anointed One"; *Christos* in Greek.

¹⁵She is a virgin. Compare this with the Gospel of Luke, 1: 26–38.

you with a sign from
 your Lord. I will create
 for you out of clay as
 the likeness of a bird;
 then I will breathe into
 it, and it will be a
 bird,¹⁶ by the leave of God.
 I will also heal
 the blind and the leper,
 and bring to life the
 dead, by the leave of God.
 I will inform you too
 of what things you eat,
 and what you treasure up
 in your houses. Surely
 in that is a sign for you,
 if you are believers.
 Likewise confirming the
 truth of the Torah that
 is before me, and to make
 lawful to you certain
 things that before were
 forbidden unto you.
 I have come to you with
 a sign from your Lord;
 so fear you God, and
 obey you me. Surely
 God is my Lord and
 your Lord; so serve Him.
 'This is a straight path'.'

And when Jesus perceived
 their unbelief, he said,
 'Who will be my helpers
 unto God?' The Apostles¹⁷
 said, 'We will be helpers
 of God; we believe in God;
 witness thou our submission.

Lord, we believe in that
 Thou hast sent down, and we
 follow the Messenger.
 Inscribe us therefore with
 those who bear witness.'

And they devised, and God
 devised, and God is
 the best of devisers. . . .

This We recite to thee
 of signs and wise remembrance.
 Truly, the likeness of
 Jesus, in God's sight,
 is as Adam's¹⁸ likeness;
 He created him of dust,
 then said He unto him,
 'Be,' and he was.¹⁹
 The truth is of God;
 be not of the doubters.
 And whoso disputes with thee
 concerning him, after the
 knowledge that has come to thee,
 say: 'Come now, let us call
 our sons and your sons,
 our wives and your wives,
 our selves and your selves,
 then let us humbly pray
 and so lay God's curse
 upon the ones who lie.'
 This is the true story.
 There is no god but God,
 and assuredly God is
 the All-mighty, the All-wise.
 And if they turn their backs,
 assuredly God knows
 the workers of corruption.

¹⁶An echo of the so-called *Infancy Gospel*, 15:6, ascribed to the Apostle James the Less. This uncanonical, second-century collection of tales relating to Jesus' miracle-filled boyhood was well-known in the Christian communities of the eastern Mediterranean and Red Sea areas.

¹⁷Jesus' twelve closest friends and followers.

¹⁸The first man.

¹⁹Jesus was one of God's creatures — created as Adam had been created; he is not coeternal and codivine with the Father. (See Chapter 7, source 51, note 7, for the orthodox Christian doctrine of the Holy Trinity.)

Say: 'People of the Book! Come now to a word common between us and you, that we serve none but God, and that we associate not aught with Him,²⁰ and do not some of us take others as Lords, apart from God.' And if they turn their backs, say: 'Bear witness that we are Muslims.'

People of the Book! Why do you dispute concerning Abraham? The Torah was not sent down, neither the Gospel, but after him.²¹

What,
have you no reason?

Ha, you are the ones who dispute on what you know; why then dispute you touching a matter of which you know not anything? God knows, and you know not.

No; Abraham in truth was not a Jew, neither a Christian; but he was a Muslim and one pure of faith; certainly he was never of the idolaters.

Surely the people standing closest to Abraham are those who followed him, and this Prophet,²² and those who believe; and God is the Protector of the believers.

There is a party of the People of the Book yearn to make you go astray; yet none they make to stray, except themselves, but they are not aware.

People of the Book! Why do you disbelieve in God's signs, which you yourselves witness? People of the Book! Why do you confound the truth with vanity, and conceal the truth and that wittingly? . . .

Say: 'We believe in God, and that which has been sent down on us, and sent down on Abraham and Ishmael,²³ Isaac²⁴ and Jacob, and the Tribes,²⁵ and in that which was given to Moses and Jesus, and the Prophets, of their Lord; we make no division between any of them, and to Him we surrender.' Whoso desires another religion than Islam, it shall not be accepted of him; in the next world he shall be among the losers.

²⁰God has no divine associates; there is only one God.

²¹The Torah and the Gospels and, therefore, Jews and Christians postdate Abraham (Ibrahim in Arabic), the father of all Arabs and Jews.

²²Muhammad.

²³Abraham's elder son (Ismail in Arabic), from whom the

Arabs (and, by spiritual extension, all Muslims) claim descent.

²⁴Abraham's younger son (Ishaq in Arabic), from whom the Hebrews are descended.

²⁵The twelve tribes of Israel.

The Tales of Tradition



57 ▼ *Imam Nawawi,* *GARDENS OF THE RIGHTEOUS*

Although earlier Muslims, such as Malik ibn-Anas (d. 795), collected stories about the Prophet, it was not until about two centuries after Muhammad's death that Muslim scholars began to catalogue systematically the traditions that circulated about the Prophet and his Companions. The most important individual in this effort was the Persian legal scholar Ismail al-Bokhari (810–870), who reportedly collected some six hundred thousand tales (undoubtedly many were variations of common themes) and memorized more than two hundred thousand of them. From this vast body of material he identified a little over seven thousand tales as genuine, which he then preserved. The second great editor of Hadith was Bokhari's younger contemporary, Abul Husain Muslim (819–875), whose collection is almost identical to Bokhari's. Slightly less important than the work of these two scholarly giants were the collections of Abu Daud (d. 889), al-Tirmidhi (d. 892), Ibn Majah (d. 896), and al-Nisai (d. 915). The combined efforts of these six individuals are known as the *Sabih Sitta* (*The Six Authentic Compilations*).

The sheer bulk of these canonical texts, as well as the discrepancies among them and the existence of many other less universally accepted compendia of such tales, necessitated continued editing and digesting of Islamic tradition by legions of jurists and religious scholars in every generation. One of the most significant of these later scholars was the Syrian *imam* (religious teacher) Nawawi (1233–1278), whose *Gardens of the Righteous* provided an analytical digest of the spiritual values enshrined in *The Six Authentic Compilations* and several lesser collections of Hadith.

As the following texts show, Nawawi's usual method of exposition was to set out a relevant passage or series of passages from the Qur'an and then to list a number of variant stories and sayings, largely as remembered by the Prophet's Companions, that illustrate the spiritual message contained in that qur'anic text.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. Which virtues do these selections emphasize? Which of these are also part of the Judeo-Christian tradition?
2. The Arabic word used for *striving* in both the Qur'an and Hadith is *jihad*, which is often translated as "holy war." In the light of these excerpts, does this translation seem correct and complete?
3. What gives Hadith its authority, since, unlike the Qur'an, Muslims do not regard it as the literal word of God?
4. How does Hadith allow for a certain diversity within the context of religious uniformity?

5. "Hadith is a living commentary on the Qur'an, insofar as it makes explicit all that is implicit in that book." What does this statement mean? Does it appear to be a fair statement of how a Muslim would regard Hadith?
6. What picture emerges of the place of women in Islamic society? Compare the status of Muslim women with that of Hindu women as illustrated in the *Laws of Manu* (Chapter 5, source 38). Which are more striking, the differences or the parallels? What do you conclude from your answer?

ON MAKING PEACE BETWEEN PEOPLE

Allah, the Exalted, has said:

Most of their conferrings together are devoid of good, except such as enjoin charity, or the promotion of public welfare or of public peace (4.115).

Reconciliation is best (4.129).

Be mindful of your duty to Allah and try to promote accord between yourselves (8.2).

All believers are brothers; so make peace between your brothers (49.11).

Abu Hurairah relates that the Honorable Prophet said: Charity is incumbent upon every human limb every day on which the sun rises. To bring about just reconciliation between two contestants is charity. Helping a person to mount his animal, or to load his baggage on to it is charity. A good word is charity. Every step taken towards the mosque for *salat*¹ is charity. To remove anything from the street that causes inconvenience is charity (Bokhari and Muslim).

Umm Kulthum relates that she heard the Honorable Prophet say: He who brings about peace between people and attains good or says that which is good is not a liar (Bokhari and Muslim). Muslim's version adds: I did not hear him let people have a latitude in what they said except in three situations: war, making peace, and talk between husband and wife.

¹Ritual prayer performed five times daily; on Fridays Muslims gather in the mosque for community prayer. See source 58 for more on ritual prayer.

ON THE SUPERIORITY OF THE POOR AND WEAK AMONG MUSLIMS

Allah, the Exalted, has said:

Continue thy companionship with those who call on their Lord, morning and evening, seeking His pleasure, and look not beyond them (18.29).

Haritha ibn Wahb relates that he heard the Honorable Prophet say: Shall I tell you who are the dwellers of Paradise? It is every weak one who is accounted weak and is looked down upon, who if he takes an oath relying upon Allah He would fulfill it. Now shall I tell you who are the denizens of the Fire? It is every ignorant, impertinent, prideful, and arrogant one (Bokhari and Muslim). . . .

Usamah relates that the Honorable Prophet said: I stood at the gate of Paradise and observed that the generality of those who entered it were the lowly. The wealthy had been held back from it. Then those condemned to the Fire were ordered to it and I stood at the gate of the Fire and observed that the generality of those who entered it were women (Bokhari and Muslim).

ON KIND TREATMENT OF ORPHANS, GIRLS, THE WEAK, THE POOR, AND THE LOWLY

Allah, the Exalted, has said:

Continue to be kindly gracious towards the believers (15.89).

Continue thy companionship with those who call on their Lord, morning and evening, seeking His pleasure, and look not beyond them, for if thou dost that thou wouldst be seeking the values of this life (18.29).

Oppress not the orphan and chide not him who asks (93.10–11).

Knowest thou him who rejects the faith? That is the one who drives away the orphan and urges not the feeding of the poor (107.2–4). . . .

Abu Hurairah relates that the Honorable Prophet said: He who exerts himself on behalf of widows and the indigent is like one who strives² in the cause of Allah; and the narrator thinks he added: and like the guardian who never retreats, and like one who observes the fast and does not break it (Bokhari and Muslim). . . .

Anas relates that the Honorable Prophet said: He who brings up two girls through their childhood will appear on the Day of Judgment attached to me like two fingers of a hand (Muslim). . . .

Ayesha³ relates: A poor woman came to me with her two daughters. I gave her three dates. She gave one to each girl and raised the third to her own mouth to eat. The girls asked her for it. So she broke it into two parts and gave one to each of the girls. I was much struck by her action and mentioned what she had done to the Honorable Prophet. He said: Allah appointed Paradise for her in consequence of it; or he said: Allah freed her from the Fire⁴ on account of it.

Abu Shuraih Khuwailad ibn Amr Khuza'i relates that the Honorable Prophet said: Allah, I declare sinful any failure to safeguard the rights of two weak ones; orphans and women (Nisai).

ON A HUSBAND'S RIGHT CONCERNING HIS WIFE

Allah, the Exalted, has said:

Men are appointed guardians over women, because of that in respect of which Allah has made some of them excel others, and because the men spend their wealth. So virtuous women are obedient and safeguard, with Allah's help, matters the knowledge of which is shared by them with their husbands (4.35). . . .

Ibn Umar relates that the Honorable Prophet said: Every one of you is a steward and is accountable for that which is committed to his charge. The ruler is a steward and is accountable for his charge, a man is a steward in respect of his household, a woman is a steward in respect of her husband's house and his children. Thus everyone of you is a steward and is accountable for that which is committed to his charge (Bokhari and Muslim).

Abu Ali Talq ibn Ali relates that the Honorable Prophet said: When a man calls his wife for his need, she should go to him even if she is occupied in baking bread (Tirmidhi and Nisai). . . .

Umm Salamah relates that the Honorable Prophet said: If a woman dies and her husband is pleased with her she will enter Paradise (Tirmidhi).

Mu'az ibn Jabal relates that the Honorable Prophet said: Whenever a woman distresses her husband his mate from among the *houris*⁵ of Paradise says to her: Allah ruin thee, do not cause him distress for he is only thy guest and will soon part from thee to come to us (Tirmidhi).

Usamah ibn Zaid relates that the Honorable Prophet said: I am not leaving a more harmful trial for men than woman (Bokhari and Muslim).

²Jihad (see question 2).

³The daughter of Abu Bakr, the first caliph; she was the Prophet's favorite wife and a major source for Sunni (see the introduction to source 60) hadiths.

⁴Hell.

⁵Beautiful virgins who serve the saved in Paradise.

ON STRIVING IN THE CAUSE OF ALLAH

Allah, the Exalted, has said:

Fight the idolators all together, as they fight you all together, and know that Allah is with the righteous (9.36). . . .

Allah has purchased of the believers their persons and their belongings in return for the promise that they shall have Paradise, for they fight in the cause of Allah and they slay the enemy or are themselves slain. This is a promise that He has made incumbent upon Himself as set out in the Torah, and the Gospel and the Qur'an; and who is more faithful to his promises than Allah? Rejoice, then, in the bargain that you have made with Him; that indeed is the supreme triumph (9.111). . . .

O ye who believe, shall I guide you to a commerce that will deliver you from a painful chastisement? It is that you believe in Allah and His Messenger, and strive in the cause of Allah with your belongings and your persons, that is the better for you, did you but know. He will forgive you your sins and will admit you to gardens beneath which rivers flow, and to pure and pleasant dwellings in Gardens of Eternity. That is the supreme triumph (61.11-14). . . .

Anas relates that the Honorable Prophet said: To be occupied in the cause of Allah a morning or evening is better than the world and all it contains (Bokhari and Muslim). . . .

Sahl ibn Sa'ad relates that the Honorable Prophet said: Patrolling the frontier for a day is better than the world and all it contains. Your being allotted a strip in Paradise no wider than your horse-whip is better than the world and all it contains. Being occupied with striving in the cause of Allah for a morning or an evening is better than the world and all it contains (Bokhari and Muslim). . . .

Fuzalah ibn Ubaid relates that the Honorable Prophet said: Death puts an end to all action,

except in the case of one who patrols the frontier in the cause of Allah, for his activity continues to grow till the Day of Judgment and he is shielded against the trials of the grave (Abu Daud and Tirmidhi).

Uthman relates that he heard the Honorable Prophet say: Patrolling the frontier for a day in the cause of Allah is better than a thousand days of other good works (Tirmidhi). . . .

Abu Bakr ibn Abu Musa Ash'ari relates that he heard his father say in the face of the enemy: The Honorable Prophet said: The gates of Paradise are under the shadow of swords. Thereupon a man of lowly condition stood up and inquired: Abu Musa, did you indeed hear the Honorable Prophet say that? He answered: Yes. The man then turned towards his companions and saluted them in farewell. He then broke the scabbard of his sword and threw it away and walked with his sword into the enemy ranks and fought till he was killed (Muslim).

Abdullah ibn Jubair relates that the Honorable Prophet said: The Fire will not touch one whose feet are covered with dust in striving for the cause of Allah (Bokhari). . . .

Anas relates that the Honorable Prophet said: He who supplicates sincerely for martyrdom is granted it, even though he is not slain (Muslim).

Abu Hurairah relates that the Honorable Prophet said: A martyr does not suffer when he is slain any more than one of you suffers from being bitten by an ant (Tirmidhi). . . .

Abu Hurairah relates that the Honorable Prophet said: He who observes the fast for a day in the cause of Allah will find that Allah has dug a moat between him and the Fire as wide as the distance between heaven and earth (Tirmidhi).

Abu Hurairah relates that the Honorable Prophet said: He who dies without having fought in the cause of Allah and without having thought of it in his mind dies with one characteristic of hypocrisy within him (Muslim). . . .

Abu Hurairah relates that a man asked the Honorable Prophet's permission to travel and he

told him: The travel for my people is striving in the cause of Allah, the Lord of honor and glory (Abu Daud). . . .

Anas relates that the Honorable Prophet said: Strive against the idolators with your belongings, your persons and your tongues (Abu Daud).

Muhammad's Night Journey and Ascent to Heaven



58 ▼ *Muhammad ibn Ishaq,* *THE LIFE OF THE MESSENGER OF GOD*

An ambiguous passage in the Qur'an proclaims, "Glory be to Him who carried His servant by night from the sacred shrine to the distant shrine, whose surroundings We have blessed, that We might show him some of Our signs" (Surah 17.1). Most Muslims interpret the *sacred shrine* to mean Mecca's *Ka'ba*, a temple sacred to the pre-Islamic polytheists of Arabia and, once Muhammad cleansed it of its 360 idols, a shrine that has remained a focal point of Islamic devotion down to our day because Muslims believe it was constructed by Abraham (Ibrahim) and his son Ishmael (Ismail). Many Muslims further interpret the *distant shrine* to signify Jerusalem's *Temple Mount*, the site of the destroyed Jewish Temple. According to a tradition not specifically recorded in the Qur'an, one night, around the year 620, while asleep within the Ka'ba's stone porch, Muhammad was transported to Jerusalem and from there to Heaven on a mythical beast known as *Buraq*. Actually, the tradition is not and never was that simple. Many variations of the story existed (and exist) side by side, even in the Prophet's own day. Apparently, Muhammad had a mystical vision which he was reluctant or unable to discuss in detail.

Around the mid eighth century, Muhammad ibn Ishaq (ca. 704–ca. 767), the author of the first and most influential biography of the Prophet, faced the problem of trying to reconcile the often contradictory stories that he had collected regarding the Messenger of God's Night Journey. What follows is his attempt to balance and evaluate these variant accounts.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. Where does Ibn Ishaq seem to stand on the question of whether Muhammad's Night Journey was a physical one or a purely spiritual one?
2. How do these various accounts use the Night Journey to explain some of Islam's values, practices, and attributes? Be specific.
3. Compare this account of Heaven and Hell with the other visions of the Afterworld that we saw in *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (Chapter 1, source 1), the *Odyssey* (Chapter 2, source 12), and the *Aeneid* (Chapter 5, source 33). What conclusions follow from this comparative analysis?

Then the apostle was carried by night from the mosque at Mecca to the Masjid al-Aqsa,¹ which is the temple of Aelia.² . . .

The following account reached me from 'Abdullah b. Mas'ud and Abu Sa'id al-Khudri, and 'A'isha the prophet's wife, and Mu'aiya b. Abu Sufyan, and al-Hasan b. Abu'l-Hasan al-Basri, and Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri and Qatada and other traditionists, and Umm Hani' d. of Abu Talib. It is pieced together in the story that follows, each one contributing something of what he was told about what happened when he was taken on the night journey. The matter of the place of the journey and what is said about it is a searching test and a matter of God's power and authority wherein is a lesson for the intelligent; and guidance and mercy and strengthening to those who believe. It was certainly an act of God by which He took him by night in what way He pleased to show him His signs which He willed him to see so that he witnessed His mighty sovereignty and power by which He does what He wills to do.

According to what I have heard 'Abdullah b. Mas'ud used to say: Buraq, the animal whose every stride carried it as far as its eye could reach on which the prophets before him used to ride was brought to the apostle³ and he was mounted on it. His companion⁴ went with him to see the wonders between Heaven and Earth, until he came to Jerusalem's temple. There he found Abraham the friend of God, Moses, and Jesus assembled with a company of prophets, and he prayed with them. Then he was brought three vessels containing milk, wine, and water respectively. The apostle said: 'I heard a voice saying when these were offered to me: If he takes the water he will be drowned and his people also; if he takes the wine he will go astray and his people

also; and if he takes the milk he will be rightly guided and his people also. So I took the vessel containing milk and drank it. Gabriel said to me, You have been rightly guided and so will your people be, Muhammad.'⁵

I was told that al-Hasan said that the apostle said: 'While I was sleeping in the Hijr⁶ Gabriel came and stirred me with his foot. I sat up but saw nothing and lay down again. He came a second time and stirred me with his foot. I sat up but saw nothing and lay down again. He came to me the third time and stirred me with his foot. I sat up and he took hold of my arm and I stood beside him and he brought me out to the door of the mosque and there was a white animal, half mule, half donkey, with wings on its sides with which it propelled its feet, putting down each forefoot at the limit of its sight and he mounted me on it. Then he went out with me keeping close to me. . . .

In his story al-Hasan said: 'The apostle and Gabriel went their way until they arrived at the temple at Jerusalem. There he found Abraham, Moses, and Jesus among a company of the prophets. The apostle acted as their imam⁷ in prayer. Then he was brought two vessels, one containing wine and the other milk. The apostle took the milk and drank it, leaving the wine. Gabriel said: "You have been rightly guided to the way of nature and so will your people be, Muhammad. Wine is forbidden you." Then the apostle returned to Mecca and in the morning he told Quraysh⁸ what had happened. Most of them said, "By God, this is a plain absurdity! A caravan takes a month to go to Syria and a month to return and can Muhammad do the return journey in one night?" Many Muslims gave up their faith; some went to Abu Bakr and said, "What do you think of your friend now, Abu Bakr? He alleges

¹The Farther Shrine. The Mosque of al-Aqsa, which stands on Jerusalem's Temple Mount, is believed by many Muslims to be the location from which Muhammad physically rose to Heaven.

²The Roman name for Jerusalem.

³Muhammad.

⁴The angel Gabriel.

⁵Many Islamic commentators interpret this as meaning that

Muhammad rejected the extremes of asceticism (water) and hedonism (wine).

⁶The Ka'ba's stone porch.

⁷Prayer leader.

⁸The dominant tribe of Mecca, which controlled the city's commerce. Although Muhammad was of that tribe, most of its members rejected his prophecies at this time.

that he went to Jerusalem last night and prayed there and came back to Mecca." He replied that they were lying about the apostle; but they said that he was in the mosque at that very moment telling the people about it. Abu Bakr said, "If he says so then it is true. And what is so surprising in that? He tells me that communications from God from Heaven to Earth come to him in an hour of a day or night and I believe him, and that is more extraordinary than that at which you boggle!" He then went to the apostle and asked him if these reports were true, and when he said they were, he asked him to describe Jerusalem to him.' Al-Hasan said that he was lifted up so that he could see the apostle speaking as he told Abu Bakr what Jerusalem was like.⁹ Whenever he described a part of it he said, 'That's true. I testify that you are the apostle of God' until he had completed the description, and then the apostle said, 'And you, Abu Bakr, are the *Siddiq*.'¹⁰ This was the occasion on which he got this honorific. . . .

One of Abu Bakr's family told me that 'A'isha the prophet's wife used to say: 'The apostle's body remained where it was but God removed his spirit by night.'

Ya'qub b. 'Utba b. al-Mughira b. al-Akhnas told me that Mu'awiya b. Abu Sufyan when he was asked about the apostle's night journey said, 'It was a true vision from God.' What these two latter said does not contradict what al-Hasan said, seeing that God Himself said, 'We made the vision which we showed thee only for a test to men;' nor does it contradict what God said in the story of Abraham when he said to his son, 'O my son, verily I saw in a dream that I must sacrifice thee,'¹¹ and he acted accordingly. Thus, as I see it, revelation from God comes to the prophets waking or sleeping.

I have heard that the apostle used to say, 'My eyes sleep while my heart is awake.' Only God knows how revelation came and he saw what he

saw. But whether he was asleep or awake, it was all true and actually happened. . . .

One whom I have no reason to doubt told me on the authority of Abu Sa'id al-Khudri: I heard the apostle say, 'After the completion of my business in Jerusalem a ladder was brought to me finer than any I have ever seen. It was that to which the dying man looks when death approaches. My companion mounted it with me until we came to one of the gates of Heaven called the Gate of the Watchers. An angel called Isma'il was in charge of it, and under his command were twelve thousand angels each of them having twelve thousand angels under his command.' As he told this story the apostle used to say, 'and none knows the armies of God but He.' When Gabriel brought me in, Isma'il asked who I was, and when he was told that I was Muhammad he asked if I had been given a mission, and on being assured of this he wished me well. . . .

In his tradition Abu Sa'id al-Khudri said that the apostle said: 'When I entered the lowest heaven I saw a man sitting there with the spirits of men passing before him. To one he would speak well and rejoice in him saying: "A good spirit from a good body" and of another he would say "Faugh!" and frown, saying: "An evil spirit from an evil body." In answer to my question Gabriel told me that this was our father Adam reviewing the spirits of his offspring; the spirit of a believer excited his pleasure, and the spirit of an infidel excited his disgust so that he said the words just quoted.

'Then I saw men with lips like camels; in their hands were pieces of fire like stones which they used to thrust into their mouths and they would come out of their posteriors. I was told that these were those who sinfully devoured the wealth of orphans. . . .

'Then I saw men with good fat meat before them side by side with lean stinking meat, eat-

⁹Al-Hasan was a child at the time in which he witnessed this.

¹⁰Testifier to the Truth.

¹¹Surah, 37:10.

ing of the latter and leaving the former. These are those who forsake the women which God has permitted and go after those he has forbidden.

'Then I saw women hanging by their breasts. These were those who had fathered bastards on their husbands.' . . .

To continue the tradition of Sa'id al-Khudri: "Then I was taken up to the second heaven and there were the two maternal cousins Jesus, Son of Mary, and John, son of Zakariah.¹² Then to the third heaven and there was a man whose face was as the moon at the full. This was my brother Joseph, son of Jacob. Then to the fourth heaven and there was a man called Idris.¹³ And we have exalted him to a lofty place." Then to the fifth heaven and there was a man with white hair and a long beard, never have I seen a more handsome man than he. This was the beloved among his people Aaron son of 'Imran.¹⁴ Then to the sixth heaven, and there was a dark man with a hooked nose. . . . This was my brother Moses, son of 'Imran. Then to the seventh heaven and there was a man sitting on a throne at the gate of the immortal mansion. Every day seventy thousand angels went in not to come back until the resurrection day. Never have I seen a man more like myself. This was my father Abraham.¹⁵ Then he took me into Paradise and there I saw a damsel with dark red lips and I asked her to whom she

belonged, for she pleased me much when I saw her, and she told me "Zayd b. Haritha." The apostle gave Zayd the good news about her."¹⁶

From a tradition of 'Abdullah b. Mas'ud from the prophet there has reached me the following: When Gabriel took him up to each of the heavens and asked permission to enter he had to say whom he had brought and whether he had received a mission and they would say 'God grant him life, brother and friend!' until they reached the seventh heaven and his Lord. There the duty of fifty prayers a day was laid upon him.

The apostle said: 'On my return I passed by Moses and what a fine friend of yours he was! He asked me how many prayers had been laid upon me and when I told him fifty he said, "Prayer is a weighty matter and your people are weak, so go back to your Lord and ask him to reduce the number for you and your community." I did so and He took off ten. Again I passed by Moses and he said the same again; and so it went on until only five prayers for the whole day and night were left. Moses again gave me the same advice. I replied that I had been back to my Lord and asked him to reduce the number until I was ashamed, and I would not do it again. He of you who performs them in faith and trust will have the reward of fifty prayers.'¹⁷

¹²Known to Christians as John the Baptist.

¹³Known to Jews and Christians as Enoch, the father of Methuselah.

¹⁴See source 56, note 11.

¹⁵See source 56, notes 21, 23, and 24.

¹⁶Zayd was a former slave whom Muhammad freed and then

received into his house as a foster son. Muhammad arranged the marriage between Zayd and the beautiful Zaynab bint Jahsh. Later, when Zayd divorced Zaynab, Muhammad married her.

¹⁷ See source 57, note 1.

Shari'a: God's Law



59 ▼ *Ibn Abi Zayd al-Kayrawani,* *THE TREATISE ON LAW*

Because Muslims believe that Allah imparted to His community of believers a body of revelation that encompasses every aspect of their being, the study and application of Sacred Law, or *Shari'a*, became and remains one of Islam's most

revered religious professions. Among *Sunni*, or mainstream, Muslims, four major schools of jurisprudence emerged: the *Shafi'i*, the *Hanafi*, the *Hanbali*, and the *Maliki* — each founded by and named after an early master of the law. Although the schools differed in some matters of juristic interpretation and emphasis, they agreed on fundamental legal principles and were largely divided along regional, rather than ideological, lines. All four schools recognized “the four roots of jurisprudence”: first and foremost, the *Qur'an*; then the *sunna*, or pathway, of the Prophet as preserved in Hadith, which provides a model for true Islamic behavior; then the consensus of the *umma*, which cannot err because it is God’s community; and finally a measure of personal interpretation based on reason and good sense. Jurists belonging to the *Shi'ite* branch of Islam, however, rejected as a matter of doctrine the consensus of the community as a valid root of the law and relied, instead, on the infallible teachings of their *imams*. For more on imams and the Shi'ite-Sunni schism in Islam, see source 60.

The Maliki school, named after its eighth-century founder Malik ibn 'Anas, dominated North Africa, and one of that region’s foremost legal scholars within the Maliki tradition was Ibn Abi Zayd al-Kayrawani (922–996), author of a celebrated textbook of juristic principles. In the following excerpt from this compendium of the law, he deals with a phenomenon we saw in source 57 — *jihad*.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. What specific rules does al-Kayrawani delineate regarding the waging of jihad?
2. Based on this text, what do you infer was al-Kayrawani’s view of the nature and purpose of jihad?
3. Reread that portion of source 57 dealing with jihad. Is al-Kayrawani’s vision of jihad the same as that of Imam Nawawi? What conclusions follow from your answer?

Jihad is a precept ordained by God. Performance of it by certain individuals can dispense others from [having to perform] it. We Malikis maintain that it is preferable not to begin hostilities with the enemy before they have been invited to embrace the religion of God, unless the enemy attacks first. They have the choice of either converting to Islam or paying the *jizya*.¹ Failing either, war will be declared against them. The *jizya* can only be accepted from them if they inhabit a region where our laws can be enforced. If they

are beyond our reach, the *jizya* cannot be accepted from them unless they move into our territory. Failing that, we will make war upon them. . . .

It is our duty to fight the enemy without inquiring as to whether we shall be under the command of a pious or a sinful leader.

There is no prohibition against killing white non-Arabs who have been taken prisoner. But no one may be executed who has been granted the *aman*.² The promises made to them must not be broken. Women and children must not be

¹The *jizya* was a poll (head) tax imposed on all non-Muslims who were subject to the authority of an Islamic ruler. The tax was a symbol of the nonbeliever’s inferior status but also indicated the taxpayer’s acceptance of the civil au-

thority of Islam and protection under that authority. See the section “Islam and Unbelievers,” page 254.

²The promise of protection.

executed, and the killing of monks and rabbis must be avoided unless they have taken part in the fighting. Women who have participated in the fighting may also be executed. The *aman* granted by [even] the lowest-ranking Muslim must be recognized by [all] other Muslims. Women and young children can also grant the *aman* when they are aware of its significance. Yet,

according to another opinion, it is only valid if confirmed by an *imam*.³ The imam will retain one fifth of the booty captured by the Muslims in the course of the war, and he will distribute the remaining four fifths among the army's soldiers. Preferably, the division of spoils will take place in enemy territory.

³A religious leader.

Variety and Unity in Islam

Ideally, Islam is a single community united in its submission and service to God. In fact, however, it has been fragmented into a wide variety of sects and schools. Chief among these are the *Sunni* and *Shi'ite* traditions and various forms of *Sufi* mysticism.

Despite these divisions, Muslims have maintained a degree of unity because of the centrality of the Qur'an in the life of every practicing Muslim, regardless of sect, and most Muslims' acceptance of certain fundamental religious obligations. Most basic of all are the *Five Pillars of Islam*: to say with absolute conviction, "There is no god but the God, and Muhammad is the Messenger of God"; to offer prescribed prayers at five stipulated times during the day; to give alms in charity to poorer members of the Islamic community; to fast from sunrise to sunset during the month of Ramadan; and to make a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in one's lifetime. Some Muslims add a sixth pillar, *jihad*, which is understood in many different senses.

God's Martyrs: The Party of Ali

60 ▼ *Ibn Babawayh al-Saduq*, CREED CONCERNING THE IMAMS

The Six Authentic Compilations preserve traditions sacred to that majority element of Islam known as *Sunni* Muslims, who claim to follow the correct path (*sunna*) of tradition as it evolved from the day of the Prophet and his Companions to the present. Underlying the Sunni self-image is the belief that God's community is *infallible*, which means that it can never err. Consequently, the practices and institutions of mainstream Islam are always correct. Another major faction of Islam, which claims its own Hadith as the authentic record of the words and actions of the Prophet and his closest Companions, is the *Shi'at Ali* (Party of Ali). Members of this branch of Islam, known popularly as *Shi'ites*, today comprise

almost all of Iran's population, are a slight majority in Iraq, and also inhabit portions of Syria, Lebanon, and the Indian subcontinent.

The Shi'ite break with other Muslims dates back to the mid seventh century. Partisans of Ali, Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law, managed to have him installed as fourth caliph (r. 656–661) following the murder of Caliph Uthman (r. 644–656). Many of Uthman's followers did not recognize Ali, however, and civil war ensued. The result was Ali's assassination in 661, establishment of the rival *Umayyad Dynasty* in the caliphate (r. 661–750), and the martyrdom of Ali's son, *al-Husayn*, the Prophet's sole surviving grandson, in 680. Supporters of the family of Ali, who included many of the original Muslims of the first Islamic community at Medina, refused to accept the Umayyads as rightful successors of the Prophet. Following the patriarchal traditions of the desert, they claimed that only a member of Muhammad's family could succeed him as *imam*, or religious leader, of Islam. The result was a schism in Islam, and to this day the annual commemoration of al-Husayn's martyrdom at Karbala is the most sorrowful event on the Shi'ite religious calendar.

Often persecuted as religious dissidents and driven underground, the Shi'ites evolved a theology of history. They not only traced the rightful succession of leadership over the community of Islam from Muhammad and Ali through a number of subsequent imams, whom the Sunnis did not accept as legitimate, but they also developed the notion of a messianic *hidden imam*, or *Mahdi* (the Guided One). According to this religious vision, the imams who followed Muhammad were infallible teachers who spoke with the same authority as the Prophet. This line of earthly imams ended, however, at an early point in time (here the various Shi'ite sects disagree as to who was the last visible imam). The imamate, however, was not destroyed. Rather, the last visible imam had, through the power of God, withdrawn from human sight into a state of *occultation*, or spiritual concealment. There he would remain until some future time when he would reappear as the Mahdi to gather his faithful, persecuted followers around him, usher in an Islamic holy age, and herald the Last Judgment.

The largest of all Shi'ite sects is the *Twelver Shia*, which developed around the year 900. These Shi'ites, who predominate in Iran, accept a line of twelve infallible imams, divinely appointed from birth, and believe that the twelfth and last of these visible imams disappeared in the late ninth century.

The following selection from the *creed*, or statement of belief, of Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Babawayh, known as *Sheik al-Saduq* (d. 991), one of the greatest of the early Twelver theologians, illustrates several major Twelver beliefs.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. Who is Muhammad al-Qa'im, and what will he accomplish?
2. What happened to the Prophet Muhammad and each of the first eleven Imams?
3. What is *taqiya*, and why is it obligatory for a Shi'ite? In what ways does a follower of the imams follow the model of al-Qa'im by practicing *taqiya*?

4. Can you find any suggestion that Shi'ites believe they possess a secret religious truth denied Sunnis? What would be the source of that truth?
5. Shi'ites are said to see themselves as the persecuted, righteous remnant of Islam. Is there any evidence in this document to support such a conclusion? Explain your answer.
6. How does al-Saduq view Sunnis? Please be specific.

Our belief concerning the number of the prophets is that there have been one hundred and twenty-four thousand prophets and a like number of plenipotentiaries. Each prophet had a plenipotentiary to whom he gave instructions by the command of God. And concerning them we believe that they brought the truth from God and their word is the word of God, their command God's command, and obedience to them obedience to God. . . .

The leaders of the prophets are five (on whom all depends): Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad. Muhammad is their leader . . . he confirmed the (other) apostles.

It is necessary to believe that God did not create anything more excellent than Muhammad and the Imams. . . . After His Prophet,¹ the proofs of God for the people are the Twelve Imams. . . .

We believe that the Proof of Allah in His earth and His viceregent among His slaves in this age of ours is the Upholder [*al-Qa'im*] [of the law of God], the Expected One, Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Askari.² He it is concerning whose name and descent the Prophet was informed by God, and he it is who WILL FILL THE EARTH WITH JUSTICE AND EQUITY JUST AS IT IS NOW FULL OF OPPRESSION AND WRONG. He it is whom God will make victorious over the whole world until from every place the call to prayer is heard and religion will belong entirely to God, exalted be He. He is the rightly guided *Mahdi* about whom the

prophet gave information that when he appears, Jesus, son of Mary, will descend upon the earth and pray behind him.³ We believe there can be no other *Qa'im* than him; he may live in the state of occultation⁴ (as long as he likes); were it the space of the existence of this world, there would be no *Qa'im* other than him.

Our belief concerning prophets, apostles, Imams, and angels is that they are infallible . . . and do not commit any sin, minor or major . . . he who denies infallibility to them in any matter . . . is a *kafir*, an infidel. . . .

Our belief concerning the Prophet [Muhammad] is that he was poisoned by Jews during the expedition to Khaybar. The poison continued to be noxious until he died of its effects.

1. Imam: And the Prince of Believers [Ali], on whom be peace, was murdered by . . . Ibn Muljam al-Muradi, may God curse him, and was buried in Ghari.
2. Imam: Hasan ibn Ali,⁵ on whom be peace, was poisoned by his wife Ja'da bint Ash'ath of Kinda, may God curse her and her father.
3. Imam: Husayn ibn Ali⁶ was slain at Karbala. His murderer was Sinan ibn-Anal al-Nakha'i, may God curse him and his father. . . .

▷ Al-Saduq then lists the fourth through eleventh imams and identifies the murderer of each.

¹The Prophet Muhammad.

²The twelfth imam. Al-Hasan al-Askari, the eleventh imam, died around January 1, 874. Twelvers believe that he was succeeded by a young son Muhammad al-Qa'im (the Upholder of God's Law), who went into concealment around 878. *Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Askari* means "Muhammad, the son of al-Hasan al-Askari."

³Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims believe that the return to Earth of the prophet and Messiah Jesus will signal the Last Judgment.

⁴Invisible to earthly eyes.

⁵Hasan, the son of (*ibn*) Ali, was Ali's elder son.

⁶Al-Husayn, Ali's younger son.

And verily the Prophet and Imams, on whom be peace, had informed the people that they would be murdered. He who says that they were not has given them the lie and has imputed falsehood to God the Mighty and Glorious.

Our belief concerning *taqiya* [permissible dissimulation of one's true beliefs] is that it is obligatory, and he who forsakes it is in the same position as he who forsakes prayer. . . . Now until the time when the Imam al-Qa'im appears, *taqiya* is obligatory and it is not permissible to dispense with it. He who does . . . has verily gone out of the religion of God. And God has described

the showing of friendship to unbelievers as being possible only in the state of *taqiya*.

And the Imam Ja'far⁷ said, "Mix with enemies openly but oppose them inwardly, so long as authority is a matter of question."⁸ . . . And he said, "He who prays with hypocrites [Sunnis], standing in the first row, it is as though he prayed with the Prophet standing in the first row." And he said, "Visit their sick and attend their funerals and pray in their mosques." . . .

Our belief concerning the Alawiya [descendants of Ali] is that they are the progeny of the Messenger of God and devotion to them is obligatory.

⁷The sixth imam.

⁸As long as there are Sunni rulers.

Sufi Mysticism



61 ▼ *Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali,* *THE ALCHEMY OF HAPPINESS*

Islam enjoins all its faithful to live a life centered on God. Those who have taken this injunction most literally, to the point of seeking mystical union with the Divine, are known as *Sufis*. The term's origins are obscure. It might derive from the rough wool (*suf*) clothes worn by Sufi ascetics; it could also refer to the reputed purity (*safa*) of their lives. Whatever the etymology of their title, Sufis have been part of Islam from its early days.

As is often the case with mystics and similar holy people, Sufis, although few in number, enjoyed widespread popularity among the masses and, like their Christian monastic counterparts, proved to be great ambassadors of the faith, as well as focal points of cultic devotion. In both life and death, many Sufi saints were revered as conduits of Allah's love, mercy, and promise of salvation. Also like the Christian desert hermits, Sufi mystics were more than just a little disturbing to many theologians, jurists, and state builders. Sufi emphasis on one's attaining a personal relationship, and even union, with God by means of a variety of meditative exercises struck many Muslim traditionalists as extremely suspicious. Sufis, however, had a champion in the person of Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali (1058–1111), Islam's most brilliant and respected theologian. This Persian Sunni managed in both his life and writings to create a synthesis of Sufi devotion and Sunni tradition and intellectualism. As a result, Sufis became more acceptable to Islam's learned religious teachers.

The following excerpts come from al-Ghazali's *The Alchemy of Happiness*, a treatise composed in the final years of his life. The title derives from al-Ghazali's

contention that the mystic, by turning away from carnal pleasures in favor of contemplating Eternal Beauty, finds Heaven while still on Earth and is transmuted from base matter into spiritual gold.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. According to al-Ghazali, what is the key element in a person's spiritual transformation?
2. Why does al-Ghazali claim that Muslims do not have a monopoly on eternal life with God?
3. Consider the central message of this selection. Is it consistent with the messages of the Qur'an and Hadith? What do you conclude from your answer?
4. Review question 2 of source 57. Assuming al-Ghazali reflects mainstream Sufi thought, how do you imagine most Sufis would understand the religious duty of jihad?
5. Compose a commentary by a Sufi follower of al-Ghazali on one of the following: Ibn Ishaq's treatment of the Prophet's Night Journey; al-Kayrawani's commentary on jihad; or al-Saduq's treatise on Shi'ism.

ON THE LOVE OF GOD

O traveler on the way and seeker after the love of God! know that the love of God is a sure and perfect method for the believer to attain the object of his desires. It is a highly exalted station of rest, during the journey of the celestial traveler. It is the consummation of the desires and longings of those who seek divine truth. It is the foundation of the vision of the beauty of the Lord.

The love of God is of the most binding obligation upon every one. It is indeed the spirit of the body, and the light of the eye. The Prophet of God declares that the faith of the believer is not complete, unless he loves God and his Prophet more than all the world besides. The Prophet was once asked, what is faith? He replied, "It is to love God and his Prophet more than wife, children, and property." And the Prophet was continually in the habit of praying, "O my God! I ask for your love, I ask that I may love whomsoever loves you, and that I may perform whatsoever your love makes incumbent upon me."

On the resurrection day all sects will be addressed by the name of the prophet whom each followed, "O people of Moses! O people of Jesus! O people of Muhammad!" even to all the beloved servants of God, and it will be proclaimed to them, "O Friends and beloved of God, come to the blessed union and society of God! Come to Paradise and partake of the grace of your beloved!" When they hear this proclamation, their hearts will leap out of their places, and they will almost lose their reason. Yahya ben Moa'z says, "It is better to have as much love of God, even if only as much as a grain of mustard seed, than seventy years of devotion and obedience without love." Hassan of Basra says, "Whoever knows God, will certainly love him, and whoever knows the world, will shun it."

O you who seek the love of God! know that this love is founded upon two things: one is Beauty, and the other is Beneficence. Beauty acts as a cause to produce love, because the being, the attributes and the works of God possess beauty, and every one loves that which is beautiful. There is a tradition which says "Verily, God

is beautiful and he loves beauty." And the Prophet says, "Desire to transact your affairs with those who have beautiful countenances." It is on this account that the spirit in man has been created in accordance with the image of beauty, so that whenever it either hears or sees anything beautiful, it may have a propensity towards it, and seek for communion with it. . . .

O inquirer after the love of God! The love of God exists in every heart, though it lies concealed, just as fire exists in the flint stone, until it is drawn out. If you take the steel of desire and affection into your hands, and with it strike the heart, you obtain fire by the means, and your soul will be filled with light. The malice, deceitfulness, hatred, vileness, envy, and strife that are in the heart will be burned up, and it will be freed and purified from sensual perturbations. But if you are careless and do nothing and pass

several days without seeking, the heart will again become like fire covered over with ashes, which by remaining a long time unused will finally be extinguished. So at last the heart becomes encased with sensual impurities and with the blackness of the passions, and is no longer capable of being enlightened with the light of truth. Our refuge is in God!

O, faithful friend, you who are worthy to be loved! Know, that the love of God is a standard that leads to victory. Whoever seeks refuge under it, will be a sovereign in two worlds, and lord of a throne at the king's court. This love is a universal solvent to secure happiness. Whoever secures it, is richer than in the possession of both worlds. God is always rich. . . . The heart which bears no traces of the love of God, is like a dead corpse, which knows nothing of its own spirit.

An African Pilgrim to Mecca



62 ▼ *Mahmud Kati,*

THE CHRONICLE OF THE SEEKER

Despite their differences, all Muslims accept certain basic beliefs, such as the Oneness of God, and perform a number of common religious obligations that serve as powerful forces for Islamic unification. Among these is the pilgrimage, or *hajj*, to Mecca. Every Muslim adult is expected, unless it is impossible, to travel once in a lifetime to Mecca, arriving during the sacred month of *Dhu-al-Hijja*, and join a vast multitude of other pilgrims in a mass celebration of devotional activities. Here Muslims of all sects, races, and social levels mingle without distinction and join in affirming the unity of the family of Islam.

The following document describes the famous pilgrimage that Mansa (King) Musa (Moses) of Mali (r. 1312–1327) made to Mecca in 1324–1325. The sheer size of Mansa Musa's entourage and the generosity this king of sub-Saharan West Africa exhibited to Muslims along the route guaranteed that the memory of his pilgrimage would not be lost. Several written accounts exist. This particular record is ascribed to the family of Mahmud Kati (1468?–1593), a native scholar and Islamic judge of Timbuktu. Kati, who according to tradition lived for 125 years, began to compose his history around 1519 and continued it until his death almost 75 years later. His sons and grandsons carried on his labors, bringing the story of Islam in West Africa down to 1655. As was the case with all contemporary writers in that region of the world, Kati and his family composed the work in Arabic.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. What does Mansa Musa's alleged reason for undertaking the pilgrimage suggest about the hajj and pilgrimages in general?
2. How did his going on pilgrimage make Mansa Musa a better Muslim? What does this suggest about the role of hajj?
3. Is there any evidence in this story to suggest that Islam, though a world religion, still retained strong Arabic connections and flavor? Please explain your answer.
4. What impact did Mansa Musa's hajj have on the traditions and shared historical memory of Mali?
5. What role did oral tradition apparently play in sub-Saharan West African society?

We shall now relate some of what we have been able to discover about the history of the Mali-koy Kankan Musa.¹

This Mali-koy was an upright, godly, and devout sultan.² His dominion stretched from the limits of Mali as far as Sibiridugu, and all the peoples in these lands, Songhay³ and others, obeyed him. Among the signs of his virtue are that he used to emancipate a slave every day, that he made the pilgrimage to the sacred house of God,⁴ and that in the course of his pilgrimage he built the great mosque of Timbuktu⁵ as well as the mosques of Dukurey, Gundam, Direy, Wanko, and Bako.

His mother Kankan was a native woman, though some say she was of Arab origin. The cause of his pilgrimage was related to me as follows by the scholar Muhammad Quma, may God have mercy on him, who had memorized the traditions of the ancients. He said that the Mali-koy Kankan Musa had killed his mother, Nana Kankan, by mistake. For this he felt deep regret and remorse and feared retribution. In expiation

he gave great sums of money in alms and resolved on a life-long fast.

He asked one of the ulama⁶ of his time what he could do to expiate this terrible crime, and he replied, "You should seek refuge with the Prophet of God, may God bless and save him. Flee to him, place yourself under his protection, and ask him to intercede for you with God, and God will accept his intercession. That is my view.

Kankan Musa made up his mind that very day and began to collect the money and equipment needed for the journey. He sent proclamations to all parts of his realm asking for supplies and support and went to one of his shaykhs⁷ and asked him to choose the day of his departure. "You should wait," said the shaykh, "for the Saturday which falls on the twelfth day of the month. Set forth on that day, and you will not die before you return safe and sound to your residence, please God."

He therefore delayed and waited until these two coincided, and it was not until nine months later that the twelfth of the month fell on a Sat-

¹Titles meaning "King of Mali, Lord Musa."

²An Arabic term meaning "one who wields authority."

³Songhay lay to the east of Mali and centered on the trading city of Gao. Mansa Musa's armies conquered Gao around 1325, and Mali maintained control over Songhai until about 1375. By the late fifteenth century Songhai had replaced Mali as West Africa's major sub-Saharan trading kingdom and held this position of primacy until it was conquered in 1591 by invaders from Morocco.

⁴The *Ka'ba* in Mecca, Islam's holiest site.

⁵Timbuktu was the major trading city of the kingdom of Mali from 1325 to 1433. Its mosque school became the chief center of Islamic learning in sub-Saharan West Africa.

⁶A term that means "the Learned." Islam has no priests but, very much like Rabbinical Judaism, its religious authorities attain and hold their position by virtue of their learning.

⁷An Arabic title of respect meaning "elder."

urday. He set forth when the head of his caravan had already reached Timbuktu, while he himself was still in his residence in Mali.

Since that time travelers of that people believe it is lucky to set out on a journey on a Saturday which falls on the twelfth of a month. It has become proverbial that when a traveler returns in a bad state, they say of him, "Here is one who did not set out on the Mali-koy's Saturday of departure!"

Kankan Musa set out in force, with much money and a numerous army. A scholar told me that he heard from our shaykh, the very learned qadi⁸ Abu'l-Abbas Sidi Ahmad ibn Ahmad ibn Anda-ag-Muhammad, may God have mercy on him and be pleased with him, that on the day when the pasha⁹ Ali ibn al-Qadir¹⁰ left for Twat, announcing that he was going on the pilgrimage to Mecca, he asked how many persons were going with him and was told that the total number of armed men the pasha had with him was about eighty. "God is great! Praise be to God!," said the qadi. "Everything in the world grows less. When Kankan Musa left here to go on pilgrimage he had with him 8,000 men. The Askia Muhammad¹¹ made the pilgrimage later with 800 men, that is, one-tenth of that. Third after them came 'Ali ibn 'Abd al-Qadir, with 80 men, one-tenth of 800." And he added, "Praise be to God, other than Whom there is no God! 'Ali ibn 'Abd al-Qadir did not even achieve his purpose."

Kankan Musa went on his journey, about which there are many stories. Most of them are untrue and the mind refuses to accept them. One such story is that in every town where he stopped on Friday between here and Egypt he built a mosque on that very day. It is said that the mosques of Gundam and Dukurey were among

those he built. Both at lunch and at dinner, from when he left his residence until he returned, he ate fresh fish and fresh vegetables.

I was told that his wife, called Inari Konte, went with him, accompanied by 500 of her women and serving women.

Our shaykh, the Mori Bukar ibn Salih, . . . may God have mercy on him, told me that Kankan Musa took forty mule-loads of gold with him when he went on his pilgrimage and visited the tomb of the Prophet.¹²

It is said that he asked the shaykh of the noble and holy city of Mecca, may Almighty God protect it, to give him two, three, or four *sharifs*¹³ of the kin of the Prophet of God, may God bless him and save him, to go with him to his country, so that the people of these parts might be blessed by the sight of them and by the blessing of their footsteps in these lands. But the shaykh refused, it being generally agreed that such things should be prevented and refused out of respect and regard for the noble blood of the *sharifs* and for fear lest one of them fall into the hands of the infidels and be lost or go astray. But he persisted in his request and urged them very strongly, until the shaykh said, "I will not do it, but I will neither command nor forbid it. If anyone wishes, let him follow you. His fate is in his own hands, I am not responsible."

The Mali-koy then sent a crier to the mosques to say, "Whoever wishes to have a thousand *mithqals*¹⁴ of gold, let him follow me to my country, and the thousand is ready for him." Four men of the tribe of Quraysh¹⁵ came to him, but it is claimed that they were freedmen¹⁶ of Quraysh and not real Qurayshis. He gave them 4,000, 1,000 each,¹⁷ and they followed him, with their families, when he returned to his country.

⁸An Islamic judge who interprets and administers Shari'a.

⁹A Turkish title meaning "chief."

¹⁰Governor of Timbuktu, 1628–1632.

¹¹Askia (Emperor) Muhammad Ture the Great (r. 1492–1528), Lord of Songhai. The askia undertook his pilgrimage in 1495–1496, accompanied by Mahmud Kati, who was one of his chief advisors.

¹²The Prophet's tomb is in Medina.

¹³An Arabic title meaning "exalted one."

¹⁴A weight of precious metal that varied by region.

¹⁵The tribe of the Prophet.

¹⁶Freed former slaves, therefore Qurayshis by adoption, not birth.

¹⁷He gave each of four men one thousand *mithqals* of gold.

When the Mali-koy reached Timbuktu on his way back, he collected ships and small boats on which he transported their families and luggage, together with his own women, as far as his country, for the riding animals were too exhausted to use. When the ships, carrying the *sharifs* from Mecca, reached the town of Kami, the Dienné-koy¹⁸ . . . attacked the ships and plundered all that they contained. They took the *sharifs* ashore and revolted against the Mali-koy. But when the people of the ships told them about the *sharifs* and informed them of their high station, they attended them, and installed them in a nearby

place called Shinshin. It is said that the *sharifs* of the town of Kay are descended from them.

This is the end of the story of the pilgrimage of the Mali-koy Kankan Musa. . . .

As for Mali, it is a vast region and an immense country, containing many towns and villages. The authority of the Sultan of Mali extends over all with force and might. We have heard the common people of our time say that there are four sultans in the world, not counting the supreme sultan,¹⁹ and they are the Sultan of Baghdad,²⁰ the Sultan of Egypt, the Sultan of Bornu,²¹ and the Sultan of Mali.

¹⁸The lord of Dienné, technically one of Mansa Musa's vassals.

¹⁹The Ottoman sultan of Constantinople.

²⁰The last Abbasid caliph of Baghdad died in 1258.

²¹A West African trading rival of Songhai located in the region of Lake Chad, along the border of modern Chad and Nigeria.

Islam and Unbelievers

The Qur'an reminds Muslims of the heritage that they share with the *People of the Book* — namely, Jews and Christians. Yet, the Qur'an also threatens eternal hell fire for all who perversely refuse to become Muslims, including Jews and Christians who remain obstinate in their rejection of Islam. For those who embrace Islam there is God's peace. Many of the stories that comprise Hadith remind Muslims that the followers of Islam share the security of belonging to a community that, at least in the ideal, is fully integrated and supportive of all its members, even the poorest and weakest. Yet, Hadith also enjoins upon this community's members the service of jihad, or holy struggle, in the name of God, and that includes struggling against unbelievers who do not belong to that community. But what about unbelievers, or *infidels*, who submit to Islam's secular authority but remain outside of the community of Muslim faithful? How should and, more importantly, *did* Islamic rulers deal with their non-Muslim subjects, both People of the Book and those outside of the Judeo-Christian tradition? As the following sources suggest, the answer is not a simple one.

The Dhimma



63 ▼ *IBN MUSLAMA'S PACT WITH THE CHRISTIANS OF TIFLIS and THE PACT OF UMAR*

One question that faced conquering Islamic armies was how to deal with their non-Muslim subjects, particularly Jews and Christians. Contrary to one popular image, the Muslim conquerors of the seventh and eighth centuries did not, as a matter of general policy, force their new, non-Arab subjects to convert to Islam (although there is evidence of some forced conversions and even massacres of non-Muslim populations during this first age of expansion). Indeed, the Qur'an expressly forbids forced conversion, and the Prophet's own actions underscored that prohibition. In 628 Muhammad entered into a contract, or *dhimma*, with an Arabic Jewish tribe at the oasis of Khaybar, whereby he guaranteed to defend them and to respect their religious practices in return for their submission, assistance, and payment of tribute. This contract of protection became the paradigm for Islam's generals and statesmen as Arab armies exploded out of the peninsula, but the manner in which Muslims understood and applied the *dhimma* differed from age to age, place to place, and ruler to ruler. The following two documents show us two varieties of the *dhimma* and also reflect some of the ways that the pact tended to change over time.

Our first document records a pact of peace offered to the Christian inhabitants of the city of Tiflis around 653 by Habib ibn Muslama (617–662), the military commander responsible for the conquest of Christian Armenia and Georgia in the region between the Black and Caspian seas south of the Caucasus Mountains. Ibn Muslama's pact with the Christians of Tiflis is a good example of the earliest form of the *dhimma*.

The second document purports to be the pact of peace offered by Caliph Umar I (r. 634–644) to the Christians of Syria around 637, but scholars generally agree it is a later creation — crafted probably in the early ninth century when the new Abbasid Dynasty of caliphs (r. 750–1258) was occupied with crushing local revolts and needed historical support for policies that were more repressive than those of the earlier Umayyad caliphs (r. 661–750z).

However their pacts of protection might differ, the non-Muslims who lived under these compacts were known as *dhimmis* and paid a *jizya*, or poll tax (a tax levied on persons rather than on property), as a token of their submission to the authority of Islam.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. Exactly what does Ibn Muslama's pact guarantee the Christians, and what obligations does it place on them?
2. What hints are there in Ibn Muslama's pact that strongly suggest it was crafted during the first generation of Islamic expansion?

3. How does the Pact of Umar differ from Ibn Muslama's pact? Please be specific and thorough in your answer.
4. What do the differences that you discovered in answering question 3 suggest about the realities of the era of the Early Abbasids?
5. Large numbers of people living in regions conquered by Islam ultimately converted to that faith. Do these pacts suggest to you any possible reasons for some of those conversions? Please be specific.
6. Compare these two pacts with the Christian imperial laws governing pagans and Jews in *The Theodosian Code* (Chapter 7, source 51). What conclusions do you reach from your comparative analysis?

THE PACT OF IBN MUSLAMA

In the name of Allah, the compassionate, the merciful. This is a statement from Habib ibn-Muslama to the inhabitants of Tiflis, . . . securing them safety for their lives, churches, convents,¹ religious services and faith, provided they acknowledge their humiliation and pay tax to the amount of one *dinar* on every household. You are not to combine more than one household into one in order to reduce the tax, nor are we to divide the same household into more than one in order to increase it. You owe us counsel and support against the enemies of Allah and his Prophet to the utmost of your ability, and are bound to entertain the needy Muslim for one night and provide him with that food used by "the people of the Book" and which it is legal for us to partake of.² If a Muslim is cut off from his companions and falls into your hands, you are bound to deliver him to the nearest body of the "Believers," unless something stands in the way. If you return to the obedience of Allah and observe prayer, you are our brethren in faith, otherwise poll-tax is incumbent on you. In case an enemy of yours attacks and subjugates you while the Muslims are too busy to come to your aid, the Muslims are not held responsible, nor is it a violation of the covenant with you. The above are your rights and obligations to which Allah

and his angels are witness and it is sufficient to have Allah for witness.

THE PACT OF UMAR

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate! This is a writing to Umar from the Christians of *such and such a city*. When you³ marched against us,⁴ we asked of you protection for ourselves, our posterity, and our co-religionists; and we made this stipulation with you that we will not erect in our city or the suburbs any new monastery, church, cell, or hermitage;⁵ that we will not repair any of such buildings that might fall into ruins, or renew those that might be situated in the Muslim quarters of the town; that we will not refuse the Muslims entry into our churches either by night or by day; that we will open the gates wide to passengers and travelers; that we will receive any Muslim traveler into our houses and give him food and lodging for three nights; that we will not harbor any spy in our churches or houses or conceal any enemy of the Muslims.

That we will not teach our children the Qur'an; that we will not make a show of the Christian religion or invite anyone to embrace it; that we will not prevent any of our kinsmen from embracing Islam, if they so desire. That we will

¹Places that house religious communities, such as monks.

²Islam prohibits the consumption of certain foods and drink, most notably pork and alcohol.

³Muslims.

⁴The Christians of Syria.

⁵The dwelling of a Christian hermit or monk.

honor the Muslims and rise up in our assemblies when they wish to take their seats; that we will not imitate them in our dress, either in the cap, turban, sandals, or parting of the hair; that we will not make use of their expressions of speech⁶ or adopt their surnames; that we will not ride on saddles or gird on swords or take to ourselves arms or wear them or engrave Arabic inscriptions on our rings; that we will not sell wine;⁷ that we will shave the front of our heads; that we will keep to our own style of dress, wherever we might be; that we will wear belts around our waists.⁸

That we will not display the cross⁹ upon our churches or display our crosses or our sacred books in the streets of the Muslims or in their marketplaces; that we will strike the clappers in

our churches lightly;¹⁰ that we will not recite our services in a loud voice when a Muslim is present; that we will not carry palm-branches¹¹ or our images¹² in procession in the streets; that at the burial of our dead we will not chant loudly or carry lighted candles in the streets of the Muslims or their marketplaces; that we will not take any slaves who have already been in the possession of Muslims or spy into their houses; and that we will not strike any Muslim.

All this we promise to observe, on behalf of ourselves and our co-religionists, and receive protection from you in exchange; and if we violate any of the conditions of this agreement, then we forfeit your protection and you are at liberty to treat us as enemies and rebels.

⁶Muslims greet one another with certain qur'anic verses and other affirmations of their faith.

⁷See note 2.

⁸Dhimmis wore leather or cord belts; Muslims wore silk and other types of cloth belts.

⁹Although they greatly revere Jesus as the Messiah, Muslims deny he died on the cross.

¹⁰Christian churches could not ring bells; the faithful were summoned to prayer by wooden clappers.

¹¹On Palm Sunday, the Sunday that precedes Easter. This public procession commemorates Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

¹²Islam has traditionally looked upon the use of sacred images as *idolatry* (the worship of idols) and, therefore, a grave offense against God.

The Jewish Community of Twelfth-Century Baghdad



64 ▼ *Benjamin of Tudela, BOOK OF TRAVELS*

Around 1159 a Jewish traveler, Benjamin ben Jonah of Tudela, departed his native northern Spain and spent the next thirteen or fourteen years visiting several hundred Jewish communities from the Mediterranean to possibly as far east as India. Wherever he traveled he took notes on the Jewish communities that he visited and even some that he only heard about. For example, he informs us that the scattered remnants of Israel were flourishing in China. This preoccupation with the location and condition of Jewish communities suggests that Benjamin was seeking to discover places where Jews lived in peace and prospered.

In the following account Benjamin describes the quality of life for Jews under Islamic rule in Baghdad, the capital of the Abbasid caliphate. Despite what Benjamin implies, the twelfth-century caliphs exercised no real civil or military power, having surrendered those powers in the eleventh century to a variety of *sultans* and other so-called subordinates. What is more, the lands that owed the caliphs

even nominal obedience had shrunk dramatically in number and size from the days of Abbasid greatness in the early ninth century.

We must keep this in mind as we read Benjamin's enthusiastic account and ask ourselves: By exaggerating the position of the caliph, has Benjamin also exaggerated the position of the *Exilarch* (the leader of the Jewish Community in Exile)? If so, why? An answer suggests itself. Benjamin's book of travels falls into a special genre of Jewish writing known as *consolation literature*. His purpose was to offer his coreligionists the consolation of hope by showing them that, regardless of the Diaspora, the Jewish people prospered because they remained faithful to the Covenant. Given such faithful service, the day of their return to Israel was not far away. If he wanted to highlight Jewish prosperity and strict adherence to the Law, where would be a better place than in the capital of Islam?

This purpose and the possible exaggerations that followed from it do not, however, mean that Benjamin's account is so distorted as to be worthless. Other portions of his book strongly suggest that he attempted to give a true account of Jewish fortunes as he discovered them. For example, he noted that the Jewish community of Christian Constantinople, despite all of the wealth and goodness of the members of this small community of about twenty-five hundred, suffered constant public humiliation from the city's inhabitants. Presumably he visited both Constantinople and Baghdad and was able to compare the relative situations of the Jewish populations in these two imperial capitals — the two richest cities in the world, according to Benjamin.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. Who was Daniel the son of Hisdai, and what function did he serve under the caliph?
2. According to Benjamin of Tudela, what was the status of Jews within the lands ruled by the caliph, and how does he characterize Muslim-Jewish relations in the reign of al-Abbasi?
3. The Jews of Baghdad referred to their leader as *Head of the Captivity*, a term that brings to mind the earlier Babylonian Captivity and the prophecies of Second Isaiah (Chapter 3, source 22). What does this term suggest about the Jews' vision of their present status and their hopes for the future?
4. What aspects of Baghdad's Jewish community most interested Rabbi Benjamin, and what does his interest in them suggest about the reasons why Diaspora Judaism managed to flourish as a religion and a culture?
5. The introduction to this document suggests that Benjamin possibly exaggerated the position and status of the Jews of Baghdad. Which elements of this account strike you as believable? Which strike you as unbelievable or suspicious? Defend your answers.

Baghdad [is] . . . the royal residence of the Caliph Emir al-Muminin al-Abbasi¹ of the family of Muhammad.² He is at the head of the Muslim religion, and all the kings of Islam obey him; he occupies a similar position to that held by the pope over the Christians.³ He has a palace in Baghdad three miles in extent, wherein is a great park with all varieties of trees, fruit-bearing and otherwise, and all manner of animals. . . . There the great king, al-Abbasi the Caliph holds his court, and he is kind unto Israel, and many belonging to the people of Israel are his attendants; he knows all languages, and is well versed in the Law of Israel. He reads and writes the holy language [Hebrew]. . . . He is truthful and trusty, speaking peace to all men. . . .

In Baghdad there are about forty thousand Jews, and they dwell in security, prosperity, and honor under the great Caliph, and among them are great sages, the heads of Academies engaged in the study of the Law.⁴ In this city there are ten Academies. . . . And at the head of them all is Daniel the son of Hisdai, who is styled "Our Lord the Head of the Captivity of all Israel." He possesses a book of pedigrees going back as far as David, King of Israel.⁵ The Jews call him "Our Lord, Head of the Captivity," and the Muslims call him "Saidna ben Daoud,"⁶ and he has been invested with authority over all the congregations of Israel at the hands of the Emir al-Muminin, the Lord of Islam. For thus Muhammad⁷ commanded concerning him and his descendants; and he granted him a seal of office over all the con-

gregations that dwell under his rule, and ordered that every one, whether Muslim or Jew, or belonging to any other nation in his dominion, should rise up before him and salute him, and that any one who should refuse to rise up should receive one hundred stripes.⁸

And every fifth day when he goes to pay a visit to the great Caliph, horsemen, gentiles as well as Jews, escort him, and heralds proclaim in advance, "Make way before our Lord, the son of David, as is due unto him," the Arabic words being "Amilu tarik la Saidna ben Daud." He is mounted on a horse, and is attired in robes of silk and embroidery with a large turban on his head. . . . Then he appears before the Caliph and kisses his hand, and the Caliph rises and places him on a throne which Muhammad had ordered to be made for him, and all the Muslim princes who attend the court of the Caliph rise up before him. And the Head of the Captivity is seated on his throne opposite to the Caliph, in compliance with the command of Muhammad. . . . The authority of the Head of the Captivity extends over all the communities of Shinar,⁹ Persia, Khurasan¹⁰ and Sheba which is El-Yemen,¹¹ and Diyar Kalach¹² and the land of Aram Naharaim,¹³ and over the dwellers in the mountains of Ararat¹⁴ and the land of the Alans.¹⁵ . . . His authority extends also over the land of Siberia,¹⁶ and the communities in the land of the Togarmim¹⁷ unto the mountains of Asveh and the land of Gurgan, the inhabitants of which are called Gurganim who dwell by the river Gihon, and these are the

¹Also known as *al-Mustanjid* (r. 1160–1170).

²The Abbasids claimed descent from the Prophet's uncle Abbas.

³The bishop of Rome who served as head of the Christian Church in the West. See Chapter 10.

⁴Academies for the study of scripture and postbiblical law (see note 21). These scholars served as the rabbis, or religious teachers and judges, of their community.

⁵King of Israel around 1000 B.C.E.

⁶The Lord son of David.

⁷Not the Prophet Muhammad but possibly al-Abbasi's predecessor, Muhammad el-Moktafi.

⁸A public flogging in which the person receives one hundred blows.

⁹Southern Mesopotamia (ancient Sumer and Akkad).

¹⁰Northeastern Iran.

¹¹Southern Arabia; see Chapter 6, source 47. This was the presumed land of the tenth-century B.C.E. queen of Sheba, who visited Israel's King Solomon (the Bible, 1 Kings, 10:1–13).

¹²Anatolia (modern Asiatic Turkey).

¹³Northern Mesopotamia (modern northern Syria).

¹⁴Armenia.

¹⁵An Indo-European people inhabiting the Caucasus Mountain region of Georgia.

¹⁶He probably means *Iberia* not Siberia. If the reference is to Iberia, he does not mean the Iberian Peninsula, where the modern nations of Spain and Portugal are located, but rather the land that today roughly corresponds to the nation of Georgia (note 15).

¹⁷One of a number of people of the central Euphrates in biblical times (the Bible, Genesis, 10:3).

Girgashites who follow the Christian religion.¹⁸ Further it extends to the gates of Samarkand,¹⁹ the land of Tibet, and the land of India. In respect of all these countries the Head of the Captivity gives the communities power to appoint Rabbis and Ministers who come unto him to be consecrated and to receive his authority. They bring him offerings and gifts from the ends of the earth. He owns hospices, gardens, and plantations in Babylon,²⁰ and much land inherited from his fathers, and no one can take his possessions from him by force. He has a fixed weekly revenue arising from the hospices of the Jews, the markets and the merchants, apart from that which is brought to him from far-off lands. The man is very rich, and wise in the Scriptures as well as in the Talmud,²¹ and many Israelites dine at his table every day.

At his installation, the Head of the Captivity gives much money to the Caliph, to the Princes, and to the Ministers. On the day that the Caliph performs the ceremony of investing him with

authority, he rides in the second of the royal carriages, and is escorted from the palace of the Caliph to his own house with timbrels and fifes. The Exilarch²² appoints the Chiefs of the Academies by placing his hand upon their heads, thus installing them in their office. The Jews of the city are learned men and very rich.

In Baghdad there are twenty-eight Jewish Synagogues, situated either in the city itself or in al-Karkh on the other side of the Tigris; for the river divides the metropolis into two parts. The great synagogue of the Head of the Captivity has columns of marble of various colors overlaid with silver and gold, and on these columns are sentences of the Psalms²³ in golden letters. And in front of the ark are about ten steps of marble; on the topmost step are the seats of the Head of the Captivity and of the Princes of the House of David. The city of Baghdad is twenty miles in circumference, situated in a land of palms, gardens and plantations, the like of which is not to be found in the whole land of Shinar.

¹⁸Apparently he means the African Christian civilizations of Nubia (modern Sudan) and Ethiopia. Gihon was one of the four biblical rivers of the Garden of Eden and usually refers to the Nile. The Girgashites were one of the seven people who inhabited Canaan before its conquest by the Hebrews under Joshua.

¹⁹A major city that today is located in Uzbekistan, in Central Asia.

²⁰The region around Baghdad.

²¹The *Talmud* (Instruction or Learning) is a collection of postbiblical laws, customs, moral teachings, and edifying stories compiled in Palestine and Mesopotamia during the first six centuries C.E. So far as Rabbinical Judaism is concerned, it is second in authority only to the Tanakh, or Bible.

²²The ruler of the exile — Daniel the son of Hisdai.

²³Sacred hymns that constitute one of the books of the Bible.

Fourteenth-Century Hindu Dhimmis



65 ▼ THE DEEDS OF SULTAN FIRUZ SHAH

As the armies of Islam moved out of Arabia, they came into contact with cultures that practiced religions other than Judaism and Christianity, such as Zoroastrianism in Iran and Hinduism and Buddhism in India. Although Muslims might have initially viewed these religions as polytheistic faiths that deserved no consideration or protection, necessity demanded that Islamic leaders make the same accommodations with them that they made with the People of the Book.

Actually Zoroastrianism had sacred books that drew the admiration of Islamic religious teachers, once they learned of them, and it held many doctrines, such as a belief in a Last Judgment, that were quite close to those of Islam. Indeed, many of Zoroastrianism's religious tenets had deeply influenced the development of

certain Judaic, Christian, and Islamic articles of faith. So it is somewhat ironic that Zoroastrianism largely disappeared from its native land following the Islamic conquest of Iran in the mid seventh century. Although Zoroastrianism was not outlawed, the social and economic pressures placed on its priests, or *magi*, and its adherents led to the eventual conversion to Islam of most Zoroastrians who opted to remain in their homeland. The situation for Hindus under Islam was not so clear cut.

In 711 Islamic forces out of Iraq and Syria secured the extreme northwest coastal corner of the Indian subcontinent along the mouth of the Indus River, but they advanced no farther. The next Islamic advance into India came from another direction and was carried forward by Muslims from another ethnic culture. Around the year 1000, Turkish Muslims out of Afghanistan began pushing into northwest India, where they set up a base of operations in Lahore, which is located in the modern Islamic nation of Pakistan. Around the year 1200, another Islamic-Turkish group of warlords, also out of Afghanistan, swept through north central India. In the course of the next 150 years this second wave of Turks established the *Sultanate of Delhi*. At its height in the early fourteenth century, this Islamic state controlled, in varying degrees, almost the entire Indian subcontinent, except for the southernmost areas.

Firuz Shah Tugbluq, who reigned from 1351 to 1388, enjoyed the reputation of being the most pious, humane, and generous of the sultans of Delhi. Toward the end of his life he prepared an account of the accomplishments in which he took the greatest pride. In the following excerpts from that account he details the manner in which he carried out his duties toward his subjects, of whom only a minority were Muslims.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. How did Firuz Shah see his responsibilities toward Sunni Muslims? How did he treat Shi'ites?
2. How did Firuz Shah treat his Hindu subjects? Did he seem to have any sense of responsibility on their behalf? If so, what sort of responsibility?
3. Study Firuz Shah's treatment of his Hindu subjects in light of the two pacts in source 63. What conclusions follow from your analysis?
4. Compare Firuz Shah's treatment of Hindus with the way in which he dealt with Shi'ites. What conclusions follow from your analysis?
5. What did Firuz Shah believe were his greatest responsibilities and achievements? What conclusions follow from your answer?
6. Reconsider your answer to question 5 of source 63 in the light of this document. Has the present document confirmed your earlier inferences or caused you to modify them?

Praises without end, and infinite thanks to that merciful Creator who gave to me his poor abject creature Firuz. . . . His impulse for the maintenance of the laws of His religion, for the repression of heresy, the prevention of crime, and the prohibition of things forbidden; who gave me also a disposition for discharging my lawful duties and my moral obligations. My desire is that, to the best of my human power, I should recount and pay my thanks for the many blessings He has bestowed upon me, so that I may be found among the number of His grateful servants. First I would praise Him because when irreligion and sins opposed to the Law prevailed in Hindustan,¹ and men's habits and dispositions were inclined towards them, and were averse to the restraints of religion, He inspired me His humble servant with an earnest desire to repress irreligion and wickedness, so that I was able to labor diligently until with His blessing the vanities of the world, and things repugnant to religion, were set aside, and the true was distinguished from the false.

In the reigns of former kings² the blood of many Muslims had been shed, and many varieties of torture employed. Amputation of hands and feet, ears and noses; tearing out the eyes, pouring molten lead into the throat, crushing the bones of the hands and feet with mallets, burning the body with fire, driving iron nails into the hands, feet, and bosom, cutting the sinews, sawing men asunder; these and many similar tortures were practiced. The great and merciful God made me, His servant, hope and seek for His mercy by devoting myself to prevent the unlawful killing of Muslims, and the infliction of any kind of torture upon them or upon any men. . . .

By God's help I determined that the lives of Muslims and true believers should be in perfect immunity, and whoever transgressed the Law

should receive the punishment prescribed by the book³ and the decrees of judges. . . .

The sect of Shi'as . . . had endeavored to make proselytes.⁴ They wrote treatises and books, and gave instruction and lectures upon the tenets of their sect, and traduced and reviled the first chiefs of our religion (on whom be the peace of God!). I seized them all and I convicted them of their errors and perversions. On the most zealous I inflicted punishment, and the rest I visited with censure and threats of public punishment. Their books I burnt in public, and so by the grace of God the influence of this sect was entirely suppressed. . . .

The Hindus and idol-worshippers had agreed to pay the money for toleration, and had consented to the poll tax, in return for which they and their families enjoyed security. These people now erected new idol temples in the city and the environs in opposition to the Law of the Prophet which declares that such temples are not to be tolerated. Under Divine guidance I destroyed these edifices, and I killed those leaders of infidelity who seduced others into error, and the lower orders I subjected to stripes and chastisement, until this abuse was entirely abolished.⁵ . . . I forbade the infliction of any severe punishment on the Hindus in general, but I destroyed their idol temples, and instead thereof raised mosques. . . . Where infidels and idolaters worshiped idols, Muslims now, by God's mercy, perform their devotions to the true God. Praises of God and the summons to prayer are now heard there, and that place which was formerly the home of infidels has become the habitation of the faithful, who there repeat their creed and offer up their praises to God. . . .

In former times it had been the custom to wear ornamented garments, and men received robes as tokens of honor from kings' courts. Figures

¹The north central region of India inhabited largely by Hindus.

²Muhammad ben Tughluq (r. 1325–1351), his predecessor, had been noted for his cruelty.

³Shari'a according to the dictates of the Qur'an.

⁴Converts.

⁵Compare this with the *Pact of Umar*.

and devices were painted and displayed on saddles, bridles, and collars, on censers, on goblets and cups, and flagons, on dishes and ewers, in tents, on curtains and on chairs, and upon all articles and utensils. Under Divine guidance and favor I ordered all pictures and portraits to be removed from these things, and that such articles only should be made as are approved and recognized by the Law. Those pictures and portraits which were painted on the doors and walls of palaces I ordered to be effaced.⁶

Formerly the garments of great men were generally made of silk and gold brocades, beautiful but unlawful. Under Divine guidance I ordered that such garments should be worn as are approved by the Law of the Prophet, and that choice should be made of such trimmings of gold brocade, embroidery, or braiding as did not exceed four inches in breadth. Whatever was unlawful and forbidden by, or opposed to, the Law was set aside.

Among the gifts which God bestowed upon me, His humble servant, was a desire to erect public buildings. So I built many mosques and colleges and monasteries, that the learned and the elders, the devout and the holy, might worship God in these edifices, and aid the kind builder with their prayers. The digging of canals, the planting of trees, and the endowing with lands are in accordance with the directions of the Law. The learned doctors of the Law of Islam have many troubles; of this there is no doubt. I settled allowances upon them in proportion to their necessary expenses, so that they might regularly receive the income. . . .

For the benefit of travelers and pilgrims resorting to the tombs of illustrious kings and celebrated saints,⁷ and for providing the things necessary in these holy places, I confirmed and gave effect to the grants of villages, lands,

and other endowments which had been conferred upon them in olden times. In those cases where no endowment or provision has been settled, I made an endowment, so that these establishments might for ever be secure of an income, to afford comfort to travelers and wayfarers, to holy men and learned men. May they remember those ancient benefactors and me in their prayers.

I was enabled by God's help to build a . . . hospital, for the benefit of every one of high or low degree, who was suddenly attacked by illness and overcome by suffering. Physicians attend there to ascertain the disease, to look after the cure, to regulate the diet, and to administer medicine. The cost of the medicines and the food is defrayed from my endowments. All sick persons, residents and travelers, gentle and simple, bond and free, resort thither; their maladies are treated, and, under God's blessing, they are cured. . . .

I encouraged my infidel subjects to embrace the religion of the Prophet, and I proclaimed that every one who repeated the creed⁸ and became a Muslim should be exempt from the *jizya*, or poll-tax. Information of this came to the ears of the people at large, and great numbers of Hindus presented themselves, and were admitted to the honor of Islam. Thus they came forward day by day from every quarter, and, adopting the faith, were exonerated from the *jizya*, and were favored with presents and honors. . . .

Whenever a person had completed the natural term of life and had become full of years, after providing for his support, I advised and admonished him to direct his thoughts to making preparation for the life to come, and to repent of all things which he had done contrary to the Law and religion in his youth; to wean his affections from this world, and to fix them on the next. . . .

⁶Most Muslims regard the representation of human or animal figures to be blasphemy.

⁷The tombs of Sufi saints around whom cults of veneration had grown.

⁸"There is no god but *the* God; Muhammad is the Messenger of God."

My object in writing this book has been to express my gratitude to the All-bountiful God for the many and various blessings He has bestowed upon me. Secondly, that men who desire to be good and prosperous may read this and learn

what is the proper course. There is this concise maxim, by observing which, a man may obtain God's guidance: Men will be judged according to their works, and rewarded for the good that they have done.

Chapter 9

Asia

Change in the Context of Tradition

Asia was home to the world's oldest and most complex civilizations, and as such, its deeply rooted cultures were the most tradition bound. Even Asia's newer civilizations, such as Japan, exhibited an innate conservatism, in part because they had borrowed so heavily from their well-established neighbors.

Change, of course, comes to all societies, old and new, and Asia was no exception. Occasionally, it arrived in dramatic fashion, as in the destruction of the Abbasid caliphate in 1258 or the establishment of the hated *Yuan* Dynasty (1264–1368) in China. More often than not, however, change arrived clothed in the guise of tradition. Even *Kubilai Khan*, Mongol emperor of China (r. 1260–1294), adopted a Chinese name for his dynasty, performed the Confucian imperial rites, and tried to re-establish the civil service examination system. When in 1192 Minamoto Yoritomo (1147–1199) transferred all real political and military power to himself as *shogun*, he left Japan's imperial court and structure in place and allowed local lords to retain a good measure of their old feudal autonomy.

A reverence for tradition did not mean a lack of dynamism. The great urban centers of Asia — Baghdad, Cambay, Chang'an, Delhi, Hangzhou, Nara — were prosperous and cosmopolitan. China in the eleventh century had several cities with populations of a million or more, and the volume of commerce in those urban centers eventually necessitated the creation of imperially guaranteed paper money. Economic prosperity also meant artistic patronage, and as a result artistic expression flourished from Southwest Asia to Japan. As European travelers learned, the riches of Asia were no empty fable.

Japan: Creating a Distinctive Civilization

Composed of four main islands, Japan's closest continental neighbor is Korea, which at its closest point is still about 120 miles away across a stretch of often tempestuous water. This insularity has benefited Japan to the point that it is close enough to the East Asian mainland to receive the stimulation of foreign ideas but far enough away to be free to choose what it wishes to adopt from abroad. The result is a culturally homogenous Japanese civilization that has its distinctive identity but which also clearly has been the beneficiary of influences from across the Sea of Japan.

The Japanese spoken language is distantly related to Korean but unrelated to Chinese, suggesting that the ancestors of the historical Japanese originated in lands northeast of China and migrated down into the Korean Peninsula, from where they sailed into the archipelago of islands that make up Japan. There they slowly displaced the islands' original inhabitants, including the *Ainu*, who are physically quite different from the Japanese. It is not at all clear when this migration took place, but sometime after 300 B.C.E. the Japanese emerged as an identifiable culture. It was only in the period around the end of the fourth century B.C.E. that agriculture based on rice cultivation arrived from South China, probably by way of Korea. Given Korea's proximity and earlier historical development, it is not at all surprising that the peninsula proved to be a major conduit for cultural imports from mainland East Asia. Around 200 C.E. the Japanese were working iron, a Chinese process received from Korea.

Japan's first identifiable state arose no earlier than the third century C.E. when the chieftains of a clan devoted to the Sun Goddess established their hegemony on the Yamato Plain in the western regions of the island of Honshu. To the Chinese, Japan in this period was the rustic land of *Wa*, which they represented by an ideograph that meant "dwarf." The Japanese themselves were illiterate until, as the story goes, a Korean scribe named Wani arrived in 405 C.E. to offer instruction in Chinese script, which the Japanese quickly adapted to their language. In the mid sixth century a Chinese form of Mahayana Buddhism made its way to Japan from Korea, and in 646 it was officially acknowledged as the religion of the aristocracy. The coming of Buddhism sharpened the desire of Japan's leaders to adopt Chinese culture, and during the seventh and eighth centuries the imperial court of Japan dispatched numerous sons of noblemen to China's imperial court at *Chang'an*, where they could observe firsthand the governmental system of the *Tang Dynasty* (618–907) before returning home to assume important official positions. These visitors to *Chang'an* brought back with them not only the forms of Chinese government but also some of the spirit that infused Chinese culture. Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism were woven into the fabric of Japanese civilization during these centuries of tutelage. What is more, many Chinese tastes, artistic styles, and artifacts were adopted.

Never, however, did these Chinese influences destroy native Japanese culture. The religion of *Shinto* (the way of the gods), Japan's original animistic religion, is

a good example. Shinto remained a vital force within Japanese culture despite attempts by some Japanese leaders to suppress it as a backward religion. Just as important, clan descent and inherited status remained vital social and political determinants in Japan. Unlike China, whose tightly organized government was increasingly in the hands of a professional class of scholars, Japan's society and government remained in the control of feudal clan lords and hereditary aristocrats. Japan experimented with but chose not to adopt the Chinese civil service examinations.

In 794 Emperor Kammu moved his capital from *Heijo* (known today as *Nara*), which had been modeled physically upon the Tang capital at Chang'an, to *Heian-kyo* (later known as *Kyoto*) in order to end what seemed to him to be a slavish imitation of everything Chinese. Tang China was now in turmoil, and it was a good time to modify and even discard some aspects of Chinese culture that earlier Japanese Sinophiles (lovers of all things Chinese) had adopted so enthusiastically. During the *Heian Period* (794–1185) the culture of the imperial court soared to unprecedented levels of refinement, and Japanese civilization reached a level of mature independence it would never relinquish. The Japanese became more selective in their assimilation of Chinese influences and increasingly discovered inspiration for creative expression in their own land and people.

History in Service to State-Building



66 ▼ *Yasumaro, PREFACE TO RECORDS OF ANCIENT MATTERS*

The years 645–650 are often referred to as the era of the *Taika*, or Great Transformation, in which a series of administrative and land reforms was instituted in the hope of fashioning a bureaucratic state in Japan modeled on that of Tang China. In fact, however, these reforms were implemented only piecemeal over the course of the seventh and eighth centuries, and even then many adjustments were made to fit the special needs of Japanese culture and society. The result was a state that was uniquely Japanese, despite its borrowings. The power of the aristocratic clans and the spirit of local autonomy defeated the reformers' attempts at creating a Chinese-style state in which bureaucrats dispatched from and directed by a central imperial court governed the provinces. At the same time, the reformers did bring forth a state at whose center stood a theoretically all-powerful emperor (or empress) who, unlike the Chinese emperor, did not simply rule with the Mandate of Heaven but ruled by virtue of descent from Japan's most popular native deity, the Sun Goddess. Of course, theory and reality usually diverged. Despite claims of divine power, emperors and empresses of the imperial *Yamato* family rarely could control Japan's most powerful clan chieftains. Indeed, the opposite was more the case. Several powerful clans vied to control the imperial family.

Ironically, although Japanese political reformers often adopted Chinese ideas and cultural forms in support of political ends, it was those ideas and forms and

not Chinese-inspired governmental institutions that proved, in the end, to have the deepest and most long-lasting impact on Japanese civilization.

One example of this is the art of history writing. Japan's reformers adopted the Chinese concept that government must maintain a clear and full record of the past. Beginning early in the eighth century, the Japanese began compiling histories and have continued to practice the art to the present. The earliest of Japan's written histories is the *Kojiki*, or *Records of Ancient Matters*, of 712. The work begins with the mythical origins of Japan and extends down through the reign of Empress Suiko (r. 592–628), the first of several women to reign over Japan between 592 and 770. During her reign, two powerful lords, *Umako* and *Prince Shotoku*, pushed forward the causes of Buddhism and Chinese social-political philosophy, the adoption of which they saw as keys to Japan's transformation.

The following selections come from the *Kojiki*'s so-called Preface. Actually, it is not a preface but a document that its author, Yasumaro, composed to accompany the copy of the *Kojiki* that he presented to Empress Gemmei (r. 707–715).

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. How does this document justify Emperor Temmu's seizure of the throne?
2. How does this account combine native Japanese elements with Confucian ideology? Be specific.
3. Based on this document, what do you conclude were the reasons why the reformers promoted the recording of Japanese history?

I, Yasumaro, do say:

When the primeval matter had congealed but breath and form had not yet appeared, there were no names and no action.¹ Who can know its form?

However, when Heaven and Earth were first divided, the three deities became the first of all creation.² The Male and Female³ here began, and the two spirits⁴ were the ancestors of all creation.

Whereupon after the going in and coming out from the seen and unseen worlds, the sun and moon were revealed. . . . Thus, though the primeval beginnings be distant and dim, yet by the ancient teachings do we know the time when the lands were conceived and the islands born; though the origins be vague and indistinct, yet

by relying upon the sages of antiquity do we perceive the age when the deities were born and men were made to stand. . . .

The borders were determined and the lands were developed during the reign at Tika-tu-Apumi,⁵ and the titles were corrected and the clan-names selected during the rule of Topo-tu-Asuka.⁶

Although each reign differed in the degree of swiftness or slowness, and each was not the same in refinement and simplicity; yet there was not one [ruler] who did not by meditating upon antiquity straighten manners which had collapsed, and who did not by comparing the present with antiquity strengthen morals and teachings verging on extinction.

¹A primeval state of nonaction (see Chapter 4, source 23).

²Three invisible deities who had no female counterparts.

³Yang and Yin (see Chapter 4, source 26).

⁴The male and female deities Izanagi and Izanami.

⁵Emperor Seimu, a mythical early emperor. If he ever existed, this Yamato clan leader probably lived during the fourth century C.E.

⁶Emperor Ingyo, another mythical emperor.

Coming now to the reign of the emperor who ruled Opo-ya-sima in the great palace of Kiyomipara in Asuka.⁷

Already as latent dragon⁸ he embodied the royal qualities, and the repeated thunder-peals⁹ responded to the times.

Hearing the song in a dream, he thought to inherit the Throne; arriving at the water by night, he knew that he was to receive the Dignity.¹⁰

But the time of Heaven had not yet come, and cicada-like he shed his wrappings in the southern mountains.¹¹

As popular support grew for his cause, he walked tiger-like in the eastern lands.¹²

The imperial chariot proceeded with quick willingness, crossing over the mountains and rivers.

The six regiments shook like thunder, and the three armies moved like lightning.

The spears and javelins revealed their might, and the fierce warriors rose up like smoke.

The crimson banners gleamed upon the weapons, and the treacherous band collapsed like tiles.

Before a fortnight had elapsed,¹³ the foul vapors had been purified.

Thus they released the cattle and rested the steeds, and returned peacefully to the capital.

Furling the banners and putting away the halberds, they remained singing and dancing in the city.

As the star rested in the region of the Cock,¹⁴ in the second month, in the great palace of

Kiyomipara he ascended [the throne] and assumed the Heavenly Dignity.

In the Way he excelled the Yellow Emperor;¹⁵ in Virtue he surpassed the king of Zhou.¹⁶

Grasping the regalia, he ruled the six directions; gaining the Heavenly Lineage, he embraced the eight corners.

Adhering to the Two Essences,¹⁷ he put the five elements¹⁸ in right order.

He set forth profound principles to implant good practices, and he proposed noble manners to issue throughout the land.

Not only this, his wisdom was vast as the sea, searching out antiquity; his mind was bright as a mirror, clearly beholding former ages.

Whereupon, the Emperor said:

"I hear that the *Teiki*¹⁹ and *Honji*²⁰ handed down by the various houses have come to differ from the truth and that many falsehoods have been added to them.

"If these errors are not remedied at this time, their meaning will be lost before many years have passed.

"This is the framework of the state, the great foundation of the imperial influence.

"Therefore, recording the *Teiki* and examining the *Kuji*,²¹ discarding the mistaken and establishing the true, I desire to hand them on to later generations."

At that time there was a court attendant whose surname was Piyeda and his given name Are. He was twenty-eight years old.

He possessed such great native intelligence

⁷Emperor Temmu (r. 673–686). A champion of Chinese-style reforms, he was one of the few emperors who ruled as well as reigned.

⁸"Latent dragon" was the Chinese expression for a crown prince.

⁹Signals that he should take the throne.

¹⁰A reference to a story that his accession to the imperial throne was foretold to him alongside a river.

¹¹A cicada is one of several types of insects that produce a droning noise. Here the image is of Temmu's shedding his outer robes and retiring to the mountains, ostensibly as a Buddhist hermit, while his brother, Emperor Tenji (r. 668–672), was still alive. This was a tactical ploy to disarm his enemies at the court.

¹²Once his brother died, Temmu rose in rebellion against

his nephew, Prince Otomo, Tenji's son and designated successor.

¹³The rebellion achieved its goal in twelve days.

¹⁴The Year of the Cock — 673.

¹⁵Chapter 4, source 26.

¹⁶Either King Wen or King Wu, two of Confucius' idealized rulers of Zhou.

¹⁷Yin and Yang (see note 3).

¹⁸Water, fire, wood, metal, and earth.

¹⁹The *Imperial Chronicles*: a document consisting of genealogical and similar basic information relating to the imperial family.

²⁰The *Fundamental Dicta*: apparently a collection of ancient stories and songs.

²¹Another name for the *Honji* (*Fundamental Dicta*).

that he could repeat orally whatever met his eye, and whatever struck his ears was indelibly impressed in his heart.

Then an imperial command was given to Are to learn the *Sumera-mikoto no pi-tugi*²² and the *Saki-no-yo no puru-goto*.²³

However, the times went on and the reign changed before this project was accomplished.

Prostrate, I consider how Her Imperial Majesty,²⁴ gaining the One,²⁵ illumines the Universe; being in communion with the Three,²⁶ nurtures the populace.

Ruling in the Purple Pavilion, her virtue extends to the limit of the horses' hoof-prints; dwelling in the Concealed Palace, her influence illumines the furthest extent of the prows of the boats.

The sun rises with doubled radiance; the clouds are scattered and there are no mists.

Auspicious signs — connected stalks and double rice-ears — are ceaselessly recorded by the scribes; tribute from across countless border beacon-fires and through numberless translations

does not leave the treasury empty for a single month.²⁷

It must be said that her fame is greater than that of Emperor Yu,²⁸ and her virtue surpasses that of Emperor Tang.²⁹

Hereupon, appalled at the mistakes in the *Kuji*, she determined to correct the corruptions in the *Senki*.

On the eighteenth day of the ninth month of the fourth year of Wado,³⁰ an imperial command was given to me, Yasumaro, to record and present the *Kuji*. . . .

Reverently, in accordance with the imperial will, I chose and took them up in great detail. . . .

In general, the account begins with the beginning of Heaven and Earth and ends with the reign of Woparida.³¹ . . .

Thus do I, Yasumaro, full of awe, full of fear, reverently bow my head again and again.

The twenty-eighth day of the first month of the fifth year of Wado.³²

²²*The Imperial Sun Lineage*: probably the *Teiki* (*Imperial Chronicles*).

²³*The Ancient Dicta of Former Ages*: the *Honji/Kuji*.

²⁴Empress Gemmei.

²⁵The throne.

²⁶Heaven, Earth, and humanity. The Chinese character for *king* (*wang*) is three parallel horizontal strokes bisected by a single vertical stroke: The king is someone who harmoniously joins Heaven, Earth, and humanity.

²⁷This is imagery borrowed from Tang China. The tribute

that flows in from far-off lands must traverse many border stations (which communicated with one another by means of fire signals) and make its way through lands where many different languages are spoken.

²⁸The legendary founder of China's Xia Dynasty.

²⁹The legendary founder of China's Shang Dynasty.

³⁰The year 711.

³¹Empress Suiko.

³²The year 712.

An Aristocratic Woman in Eleventh-Century Japan



67 ▼ *Murasaki Shikibu, DIARY*

As noted in the introduction to source 66, the centralized administrative system that Japanese reformers tried to establish during the seventh and eighth centuries failed to function as intended. By the mid ninth century true power in the provinces rested in the hands of local clan chiefs and a new element, Buddhist monasteries (see source 68). The imperial government continued to appoint provincial governors, who theoretically administered their regions in the name of

the emperor, but most governors resided in the imperial court at Kyoto, far away from their areas of nominal responsibility. The court itself became an increasingly elegant setting for emperors and empresses, who were regarded as sacred beings and theoretically stood at the summit of all power. The elaborate ceremony that surrounded these people, who claimed to rule the world, masked the fact that effective power lay elsewhere.

While the imperial court was increasingly losing touch with the center of political authority, a group of aristocratic women at court were developing Japan's first native literature. Unlike Japan's male Confucian scholars, who continued to study the Chinese Classics along fairly rigid lines established a millennium earlier in a foreign land, the court women gave free play in their prose and poetry to their imaginations, emotions, and powers of analysis.

Japan's greatest literary artist of the Heian Period was *Murasaki Shikibu* (ca. 978–ca. 1015), a lady in waiting at the court of Second Empress Akiko. Her masterpiece is the massive *The Tale of Genji*, a romance whose subtle psychological insights and realistic portraits of life have earned for it universal recognition as the single greatest piece of classical Japanese literature and one of the world's immortal novels. Focusing on the love affairs and emotions of Prince Genji, the work brilliantly captures the changing moods of people and nature.

Like many other imperial ladies in waiting, Lady Murasaki composed memoirs in which she recorded — with the same level of insight, sensitivity, and narrative ability she displayed in *The Tale of Genji* — her observations on court life and her deepest reflections. The term *diary*, which is usually used for this work, is misleading. Far from being a daily journal, it was a highly structured collection of carefully arranged elements and was intended for publication.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. What did court society expect of these women, and how did Japan's male aristocrats look upon and treat them? Supply specific details to support your answers.
2. What did this aristocratic society think of literary accomplishment? Be specific in your answer.
3. What does this work of literature tell us about the level of refinement and sophistication among Japan's aristocracy?
4. What does it suggest about the Japanese sense of beauty?
5. How Confucian was Lady Murasaki in her values and way of life? Does the diary contain any non-Confucian tones? What do you conclude from your answers to these two questions?
6. Compare Murasaki Shikibu's vision of what it means to be a woman with that of Madame Ban Zhao (Chapter 5, source 36). What do you conclude from that comparison?

As the autumn season approaches the Tsuchimikado¹ becomes inexpressibly smile-giving. The tree-tops near the pond, the bushes near the stream, are dyed in varying tints whose colors grow deeper in the mellow light of evening. The murmuring sound of waters mingles all the night through with the never-ceasing recitation of sutras² which appeal more to one's heart as the breezes grow cooler.

The ladies waiting upon her honored presence are talking idly. The Queen hears them; she must find them annoying, but she conceals it calmly. Her beauty needs no words of mine to praise it, but I cannot help feeling that to be near so beautiful a queen will be the only relief from my sorrow.³ So in spite of my better desires [for a religious life] I am here. Nothing else dispels my grief — it is wonderful! . . .

I can see the garden from my room beside the entrance to the gallery. The air is misty, the dew is still on the leaves. The Lord Prime Minister is walking there; he orders his men to cleanse the brook. He breaks off a stalk of omenaishi [flower maiden], which is in full bloom by the south end of the bridge. He peeps in over my screen! His noble appearance embarrasses us, and I am ashamed of my morning [not yet painted and powdered] face. He says, "Your poem on this! If you delay so much the fun is gone!" and I seize the chance to run away to the writing-box, hiding my face —

Flower-maiden⁴ in bloom —
Even more beautiful for the bright dew,
Which is partial, and never favors me.

"So prompt!" said he, smiling, and ordered a writing-box to be brought for himself.

His answer:

The silver dew is never partial.
From her heart
The flower-maiden's beauty.

One wet and calm evening I was talking with Lady Saisho. The young Lord⁵ of the Third Rank sat with the misu⁶ partly rolled up. He seemed maturer than his age and was very graceful. Even in light conversation such expressions as "Fair soul is rarer than fair face" come gently to his lips, covering us with confusion. It is a mistake to treat him like a young boy. He keeps his dignity among ladies, and I saw in him a much-sought-after romantic hero when once he walked off reciting to himself:

Linger in the field where flower-maidens⁷
are blooming
And your name will be tarnished with tales
of gallantry.

Some such trifle as that sometimes lingers in my mind when really interesting things are soon forgotten⁸ — why? . . .

On the fifth night the Lord Prime Minister celebrated the birth.⁹ The full moon on the fifteenth day was clear and beautiful. Torches were lighted under the trees and tables were put there with rice-balls on them. Even the uncouth humble servants who were walking about chattering seemed to enhance the joyful scene. All minor officials were there burning torches, making it as bright as day. Even the attendants of the nobles, who gathered behind the rocks and under the trees, talked of nothing but the new light which had come into the world, and were smiling and seemed happy as if their own private wishes had been fulfilled. . . .

This time, as they chose only the best-looking young ladies, the rest who used to tie their

¹The residence of Prime Minister Fujiwara Michinaga, father of Second Empress Akiko, who has returned to her father's home to give birth to Prince Atsuyada, her first child.

²Buddhist texts chanted to ensure a safe birth.

³Her husband, whom she had married in 999, had died in 1001. It is now 1008.

⁴Among Japanese writers and artists, the flower-maiden is an exclusively female symbol.

⁵The Prime Minister's son Yorimichi, who was sixteen years old.

⁶A bamboo curtain used to hide distinguished persons from view.

⁷Note the link with the preceding passage.

⁸A hint that she is composing this from memory.

⁹Of his imperial grandson.

hair on ordinary occasions to serve the Queen's dinner wept bitterly; it was shocking to see them.¹⁰ . . .

To serve at the Queen's dinner eight ladies tied their hair with white cords, and in that dress brought in Her Majesty's dining-table. The chief lady-in-waiting for that night was Miya-no-Naishi. She was brilliantly dressed with great formality, and her hair was made more charming by the white cords which enhanced her beauty. I got a side glance of her when her face was not screened by her fan.¹¹ She wore a look of extreme purity. . . .

The court nobles rose from their seats and went to the steps [descending from the balcony]. His Lordship the Prime Minister and others cast da.¹² It was shocking to see them quarreling about paper. Some others composed poems. A lady said, "What response shall we make if some one offers to drink saké with us?"¹³ We tried to think of something.¹⁴

Shijo-no-Dainagon is a man of varied accomplishments. No ladies can rival him in repartee, much less compete with him in poetry, so they were all afraid of him, but this evening he did not give a cup to any particular lady to make her compose poems. Perhaps that was because he had many things to do and it was getting late. . . .

The Great Adviser¹⁵ is displeased to be received by ladies of low rank, so when he comes to the Queen's court to make some report and suitable ladies to receive him are not available, he goes away without seeing Her Majesty. Other court nobles, who often come to make reports, have each a favorite lady, and when that one is away

they are displeased, and go away saying to other people that the Queen's ladies are quite unsatisfactory. . . .

Lady Izumi Shikibu¹⁶ corresponds charmingly, but her behavior is improper indeed.¹⁷ She writes with grace and ease and with a flashing wit. There is fragrance even in her smallest words. Her poems are attractive, but they are only improvisations which drop from her mouth spontaneously. Every one of them has some interesting point, and she is acquainted with ancient literature also, but she is not like a true artist who is filled with the genuine spirit of poetry. Yet I think even she cannot presume to pass judgment on the poems of others.

The wife of the Governor of Tamba Province is called by the Queen and Prime Minister Masa Hira Emon. Though she is not of noble birth, her poems are very satisfying. She does not compose and scatter them about on every occasion, but so far as we know them, even her miscellaneous poems shame us. Those who compose poems whose loins are all but broken, yet who are infinitely self-exalted and vain, deserve our contempt and pity.

Lady Seishonagon.¹⁸ A very proud person. She values herself highly, and scatters her Chinese writings all about. Yet should we study her closely, we should find that she is still imperfect. She tries to be exceptional, but naturally persons of that sort give offense. She is piling up trouble for her future. One who is too richly gifted, who indulges too much in emotion, even when she ought to be reserved, and cannot turn aside from anything she is interested in, in spite of herself will lose self-control.¹⁹ How can

¹⁰Shocking in the sense that they who complained looked petty.

¹¹Women were expected to hide their faces behind fans.

¹²A game of dice.

¹³Thereby challenging the person to compose an impromptu poem.

¹⁴In other words, each lady prepared beforehand her supposedly impromptu poem.

¹⁵Fujiwara Michitaka, the Prime Minister's brother.

¹⁶One of Japan's greatest poets, she was no relation to Murasaki Shikibu. As do the Chinese, the Japanese place the family name first. Moreover, *Shikibu* was not Lady Murasaki's true given name, and it was not Lady Izumi's either. Polite society considered it improper to record the

personal names of aristocratic women. *Shikibu* actually was a reference to an office that Lady Murasaki's father held, and *Murasaki*, which means "purple," might be a pun. She was descended from the Fujiwara clan, and the word *fushi* means "wisteria," a purple flower.

¹⁷She was notorious for her love affairs.

¹⁸One of the leading literary figures of her day and a bitter rival of Murasaki Shikibu. She is most noted for her *Pillow Book*, a memoir of her years of service from 991 to 1000 at the court of the first empress.

¹⁹This seems to be an attack on the *Pillow Book*, which flits from subject to subject, touching on apparently anything and everything that captured Lady Seishonagon's interest.

such a vain and reckless person end her days happily?

Having no excellence within myself, I have passed my days without making any special impression on anyone. Especially the fact that I have no man who will look out for my future makes me comfortless. I do not wish to bury myself in dreariness. Is it because of my worldly mind that I feel lonely? On moonlight nights in autumn, when I am hopelessly sad, I often go out on the balcony and gaze dreamily at the moon. It makes me think of days gone by. People say that it is dangerous to look at the moon in solitude, but something impels me, and sitting a little withdrawn I muse there. In the wind-cooled evening I play on the koto,²⁰ though others may not care to hear it. I fear that my playing betrays the sorrow which becomes more intense, and I become disgusted with myself — so foolish and miserable am I. . . .

A pair of big bookcases have in them all the books they can hold. In one of them are placed old poems and romances. They are the homes of worms which come frightening us when we turn the pages, so none ever wished to read them. [Perhaps her own writings, she speaks so slightly of them.] As to the other cabinet, since the person²¹ who placed his own books [there]

no hand has touched it. When I am bored to death I take out one or two of them; then my maids gather around me and say: "Your life will not be favored with old age if you do such a thing! Why do you read Chinese? Formerly even the reading of sutras was not encouraged for women." They rebuke me in the shade [i.e., behind my back]. I have heard of it and have wished to say, "It is far from certain that he who does no forbidden thing enjoys a long life," but it would be a lack of reserve to say it [to the maids]. Our deeds vary with our age and deeds vary with the individual. Some are proud [to read books], others look over old cast-away writings because they are bored with having nothing to do. It would not be becoming for such a one to chatter away about religious thoughts, noisily shaking a rosary.²² I feel this, and before my women keep myself from doing what otherwise I could do easily. But after all, when I was among the ladies of the Court I did not say what I wanted to say either, for it is useless to talk with those who do not understand one and troublesome to talk with those who criticize from a feeling of superiority. Especially one-sided persons are troublesome. Few are accomplished in many arts and most cling narrowly to their own opinion.

²⁰A stringed instrument.

²¹Her deceased husband, who had been a scholar of Chinese literature.

²²Literally "a garland of roses," the rosary is an aid to prayer. Consisting of beads strung together in a circle, it allows a

person to count prayers. Created by Hindus, the rosary spread among Buddhists and later to Muslims and Christians.

The Ideal Samurai



68 ▼ CHRONICLE OF THE GRAND PACIFICATION

While imperial courtiers at Kyoto composed exquisite poems that extolled the beauty of nature, Japan's warlords were engaged in carving out independent principalities backed by the might of their private armies of *samurai* (those who serve). Between 1180 and 1185 a conflict known as the *Gempei War* devastated the heartland of the main island of Honshu as the mighty Taira and Minamoto clans fought for control of the imperial family and its court. In 1185 the Minamoto house

destroyed the Taira faction, thereby becoming the supreme military power in Japan.

Rather than seizing the imperial office for himself, the leader of the victorious Minimoto family accepted the title of *shogun*, or imperial commander in chief, and elected to rule over a number of military governors from his remote base at *Kamakura*, while a puppet emperor reigned at Kyoto. This feudal system, known as the *bakufu* (tent headquarters), shaped the politics and culture of Japan for centuries to come.

Toward the early fourteenth century the *Kamakura Shogunate* began to show signs of weakening, which in turn encouraged Emperor Go-Daigo (r. 1318–1336) to lead a coup in an attempt to destroy the shogunate and re-establish the primacy of the emperor. This rebel emperor became the nucleus of a full-scale feudal uprising by a wide number of dissatisfied warlords, samurai, and warrior-monks. The warrior-monks were members of great landholding Buddhist monasteries, which already for many centuries had been centers of independent political, economic, and military power. The rebellion resulted in the destruction of Kamakura and the death of its last shogun.

Go-Daigo's victory was brief, however. Within a few years he was deposed by another warlord, who installed his own emperor and received back from him the title of shogun, thereby establishing the *Ashikaga Shogunate* (1338–1573). Japanese government and society, therefore, continued to be dominated by its feudal warriors.

The story of the last several years of the Kamakura Shogunate is recorded in the pages of the *Taiheiki*, or *Chronicle of the Grand Pacification*. Composed by a number of largely anonymous Buddhist monks between about 1333 and maybe as late as 1370, this chronicle recounts the battles and intrigues of the period 1318–1333. Its title refers to Go-Daigo's momentarily successful attempt to destroy, or "pacify," the shogunate.

Our excerpt tells the story of the defense in 1331 of Akasaka castle by *Kusunoki Masashige*, one of the emperor's most fervent supporters. This was a dark moment for the imperial forces. The emperor, along with many followers, had recently been captured at Kasagi, a fortified monastic temple. The imperial cause needed a victory, even a moral one, and this heretofore obscure warrior was about to provide new hope with his inspired defense of this stronghold.

Killed in 1333 in a battle he knew he could not win, Masashige has been revered through the centuries as a paragon of samurai virtues. The *kamikaze* (divine wind) suicide pilots whom Japan launched against the U.S. Navy in 1945 were called "chrysanthemum warriors" in reference to the Kusunoki family's flowered crest.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. Why do the warriors assaulting Akasaka hope that Kusunoki will be able to hold out for at least one day? What does your answer suggest?
2. Bravery is naturally expected of all warriors, but which other samurai virtues does Kusunoki Masashige exemplify?

3. Which samurai virtues do his foes exhibit? In what ways did they show themselves to be less than ideal warriors?
4. Thinking their enemy dead, the shogun's warriors pause to remember Kusunoki Masashige. What does this suggest?
5. Based on this account, what picture emerges of the ideals and realities of fourteenth-century Japanese feudal warfare?

No man of the mighty host from the distant eastern lands was willing to enter the capital, so sorely were their spirits mortified because Kasagi castle had fallen.¹ . . . All took their way instead toward Akasaka castle, where Kusunoki Hyoe Masashige was shut up. . . .

When these had passed beyond the Ishi River, they beheld the castle. Surely this was a stronghold of hasty devising! The ditch was not a proper ditch, and there was but a single wooden wall, plastered over with mud. Likewise in size the castle was not more than one hundred or two hundred yards around, with but twenty or thirty towers within, made ready in haste. Of those who saw it, not one but thought:

"Ah, what a pitiable spectacle the enemy presents! Even if we were to hold this castle in one hand and throw, we would be able to throw it! Let us hope that in some strange manner Kusunoki will endure for at least a day, that by taking booty and winning honor we may obtain future rewards."

Drawing near, the three hundred thousand riders² got down from their horses, one after another, jumped into the ditch, stood below the towers, and competed to be the first to enter the castle.

Now by nature Masashige was a man who would "scheme in his tent to defeat an enemy a thousand leagues distant," one whose counsels were as subtle as though sprung from the brain of Chenping or Zhang Liang.³ Wherefore had he kept two hundred mighty archers within the

castle, and had given three hundred riders to his brother Shichiro and Wada Goro Masato outside in the mountains. Yet the attackers, all unwitting, rushed forward together to the banks of the ditch on the four sides, resolved to bring down the castle in a single assault.

Then from tower tops and windows the archers shot furiously with arrowheads aligned together, smiting more than a thousand men in an instant. And greatly amazed, the eastern warriors said:

"No, no! From the look of things at this castle, it will never fall in a day or two. Let us take time before going against it, that we may establish camps and battle-offices and form separate parties."

They drew back from the attack a little, took off their horses' saddles, cast aside their armor, and rested in their camps.

In the mountains Kusunoki Shichiro and Wada Goro said, "The time is right." They made two parties of the three hundred horsemen, came out from the shelter of the trees on the eastern and western slopes with two fluttering banners, whereon were depicted the chrysanthemum and water crest of the Kusunoki house, and advanced quietly toward the enemy, urging their horses forward in the swirling mist.

The attackers hesitated doubtfully.

"Are they enemies or friends?" they thought.

Then suddenly from both sides the three hundred attacked, shouting, in wedge-shaped formations. They smote the center of the three hundred thousand horsemen spread out like

¹This force of Kamakura supporters from the east was dispirited because it had arrived too late to participate in the capture of Kasagi.

²The *Taiheiki* grossly exaggerates the number of pro-Kamakura fighters.

³Two ministers of the first Han emperor of China. The quotation is from Ban Gu and Ban Zhao's *History of the Former Han Dynasty*.

clouds or mist, broke into them in all directions, and cut them down on every side. And the attackers' hosts were powerless to form to give battle, so great was their bewilderment.

Next within the castle three gates opened all together, wherefrom two hundred horsemen galloped forth side by side to let fly a multitude of arrows from bows pulled back to the utmost limits. Although the attackers were a mighty host, they were confounded utterly by these few enemies, so that they clamored aloud. Some mounted tethered horses and beat them with their stirrups, seeking to advance; others fixed arrows to unstrung bows and tried vainly to shoot. Two or three men took up a single piece of armor and disputed it, pulling against each other. Though a lord was killed, his vassals knew nothing of it; though a father was killed, his sons aided him not, but like scattered spiders they retreated to the Ishi River. For half a league along their way there was no space where a foot might tread, by reason of their abandoned horses and arms. To be sure, great gains came suddenly to the common folk of Tojo district!⁴

Perhaps the proud eastern warriors thought in their hearts that Kusunoki's strategy could not be despised, since blundering unexpectedly they had been defeated in the first battle. For though they went forth against Handa and Narahara,⁵ they did not seek to attack the castle again quickly, but consulted together and made a resolution, saying:

"Let us remain awhile in this place, that led by men acquainted with the home provinces we may cut down trees on the mountains, burn houses, and guard thereby against warriors waiting in reserve to fall upon us. Then may we attack the castle with tranquil spirits."

But there were many . . . who had lost fathers and sons in the fighting. These roused themselves up, saying:

"What is the use of living? Though we go alone, let us gallop forth to die in battle!"

And thereupon all the others took heart as well, and galloped forward eagerly.

Now Akasaka castle might not be attacked easily on the east, where terraced rice fields extended far up the mountainside. But on three sides the land was flat; likewise there was but a single ditch and wall. All the attackers were contemptuous, thinking, "No matter what demons may be inside, it cannot be much of an affair." When they drew near again, they went forward quickly into the ditch to the opposite bank, pulled away the obstacles and made ready to enter. Yet within the castle there was no sound.

Then the attackers thought in their hearts:

"As it was yesterday, so will it be today. After wounding many men with arrows to confuse us, they will send other warriors to fight in our midst."

They counted out a hundred thousand riders to go to the mountains in the rear, while the remaining two hundred thousand compassed the castle round about like thickly growing rice, hemp, bamboo, or reeds. Yet from within the castle not an arrow was released, nor was any man seen.

At last the attackers laid hold of the wall on the four sides to climb over it, filled with excitement. But thereupon men within the castle cut the ropes supporting that wall, all at the same time, for it was a double wall, built to let the outside fall down. More than a thousand of the attackers became as though crushed by a weight, so that only their eyes moved as the defenders threw down logs and boulders onto them. And in this day's fighting more than seven hundred of them were slain.

Unwilling to attack again because of the bitterness of the first two days of fighting, for four or five days the eastern hosts merely besieged the castle from camps hard by. Truly were they without pride, to watch thus idly from a nearby place! How mortifying it was that men of the future would make a mock of them, saying,

⁴Commoners scavenged battlefields.

⁵Settlements near Akasaka.

"Although the enemy were no more than four or five hundred persons shut up in a flatland castle not five hundred yards around, the hosts of the eight eastern provinces would not attack them, but shamefully laid down a siege from a distance!"

At last the attackers spoke among themselves, saying:

"Previously we attacked in the fierceness of our valor, not carrying shields or preparing weapons of assault, wherefore we suffered unforeseen injury. Let us go against them now with a different method."

All commanded the making of shields with toughened hide on their faces, such as might not be smashed through easily, and with these upheld they went against the castle once more, saying:

"There can be no difficulty about jumping across to the wall, since the banks are not high, nor is the ditch deep. Yet will not this wall also drop down upon us?"

They spoke with fearful hearts, reluctant to seize upon the wall lightly. All went down into the water of the ditch, laid hold upon the wall with grapnels, and pulled at it. But when the wall was about to fall, those within the castle took ladles with handles ten or twenty feet long, dipped up boiling water, and poured it onto them. The hot water passed through the holes in their helmet tops, ran down from the edges of their shoulder-guards, and burned their bodies so grievously that they fled panic-stricken, throwing down their shields and grapnels. How shameful it was! Although no man of them was slain, there were as many as two or three hundred persons who could not stand up from the burns on their hands and feet, or who lay down with sick bodies.

So it was that whenever the attackers advanced with new devisings, those within the castle defended against them with changed stratagems. Wherefore in consultation together the attackers said, "From this time on, let us starve them,

for we can do no other." They forbore utterly to do battle, but only built towers in their camps, lined up obstacles, and laid down a siege.

Soon the warriors in the castle grew weary of spirit, since there was no diversion for them. Nor was their food sufficient, since Kusunoki had built the castle in haste. The battle having begun and the siege commenced, within twenty days the stores were eaten up; nor did food remain for more than four or five days.

Then Masashige spoke a word to his men, saying:

"In various battles of late have we overreached the foe, whose slain are beyond counting, but these things are as nothing in the eyes of so mighty a host. Moreover, the castle's food is eaten up, and no other warriors will come to deliver us.

"Assuredly I will not cherish life in the hour of need, from the beginning having been steadfast for His Majesty's sake. . . . But the true man of courage 'is cautious in the face of difficulties, and deliberates before acting.'⁶ I will flee this castle for a time, causing the enemy to believe that I have taken my life, so that they may go away rejoicing. When they are gone I will come forward to fight; and if they return I will go deep into the mountains. When I have harassed the eastern hosts four or five times in this manner, will they not grow weary? This is a plan for destroying the enemy in safety. What are your views?"

All agreed, "It ought to be so."

Then quickly within the castle they dug a mighty hole seven feet deep, filling it with twenty or thirty bodies of the slain (who were fallen down dead into the ditch in great numbers), whereon they piled up charcoal and firewood. And they awaited a night of pouring rain and driving wind.

Perhaps because Masashige had found favor in the sight of heaven, suddenly a harsh wind came raising the sand, accompanied by a rain violent enough to pierce bamboo. The night was exceed-

⁶A quotation from Confucius' *Analects*.

ingly dark, and all the enemy in their camps were sheltered behind curtains. This indeed was the awaited night!

Leaving a man in the castle to light a blaze when they were fled away safely five or six hundred yards, the defenders cast off their armor, assumed the guise of attackers, and fled away calmly by threes and fives, passing in front of the enemy battle-offices and beside enemy sleeping places.

It came about that the eyes of an enemy fell upon Masashige, where he passed before the stables of Nagasaki. The man challenged him, saying, "What person passes before this battle-office in stealth, not announcing himself?"

In haste Masashige passed beyond that place, calling back, "I am a follower of the grand marshal who has taken the wrong road."

"A suspicious fellow indeed!" thought the man. "Assuredly he is a stealer of horses! I shall shoot him down."

He ran up close and shot Masashige full in the body. But although the arrow looked to have driven deep at the height of the elbow-joint, it turned over and flew back again without touching the naked flesh.

Later, when that arrow's track was observed, men saw that it had struck an amulet wherein was preserved the *Kannon Sutra*,⁷ which Masashige had trusted and read for many years. Its arrowhead had stopped in the two-line poem, "Wholeheartedly praising the name." How strange it was!

When in this manner Masashige had escaped death from a certain-death arrowhead, he fled to a safe place more than half a league distant. And looking back he saw that the warrior had lighted fires in the castle's battle-offices, faithful to his covenant.

The hosts of the attackers were seized with amazement at the sight of the flames.

"Aha! The castle has fallen!" they shouted exultantly. "Let no man be spared! Let none escape!"

When the flames died away, they saw a mighty hole inside the castle, piled up with charcoal, wherein lay the burned bodies of many men. And then not a man of them but spoke words of praise, saying:

"How pitiful! Masashige had ended his life! Though he was an enemy, his was a glorious death, well befitting a warrior."

⁷A sutra, or Buddhist holy book, dedicated to the female Bodhisattva *Kannon*, the Japanese counterpart of Guanyin (see Chapter 6, sources 44 and 45).

China: The Ages of Tang and Song

The period from 500 to 1500 witnessed a variety of momentous developments in China: renewed imperial greatness, philosophical and technological innovation, economic expansion and a rapidly growing population, new modes of artistic expression, conquest by Mongol invaders, and eventual recovery and retrenchment. Through it all, Chinese civilization managed to retain intact its basic institutions and way of life.

The Time of Troubles that followed the fall of the House of Han was over by the end of the sixth century, and under the *Tang Dynasty* (618–907) China was again a great imperial power, with a restored Confucian civil service firmly in power. At the end of the seventh century China's borders reached to Korea and

Manchuria in the northeast, to Vietnam in the south, and to the Aral Sea in the western regions of Central Asia, where China met the new Islamic Empire. The almost simultaneous creation of these two empires in Asia resulted in a dramatic increase of traffic along the Silk Road. Foreign goods, precious metals, peoples, and ideas flowed into China's cities. As a consequence, Tang China enjoyed the richest, most cosmopolitan culture on the face of the Earth, until its empire began to deteriorate after the mid eighth century. Between 755 and 763 China was torn apart by a rebellion led by An Lushan, a military governor of Turkic descent. In the wake of the devastation, Tang imperial strength rapidly disintegrated, and with it went an earlier openness of spirit to outside influences. Fifty-three years of disunity followed Tang's official collapse in 907, but, in fact, the previous half century of nominal Tang rule had been equally anarchic.

In 960 the *Song Dynasty* (960–1279) reunited most of China, which it ruled from its northern capital at Kaifeng. In 1126, however, Kaifeng, along with all of North China, fell to invaders from the steppes. A younger brother to the former Song emperor escaped to the south, where he re-established a truncated Song Empire centered on the so-called temporary capital of *Hangzhou*.

For almost one-half of its more than three-hundred-year-long reign the Song Dynasty was cut off from China's traditional heartland along the Yellow River. Despite this, Song Era China reached and maintained levels of economic prosperity, technological advancement, and cultural maturity that were unequaled anywhere else on Earth at the time. By the mid eleventh century, for example, the production of printed books had become such an important industry that artisans were experimenting with moveable type — four hundred years before the introduction of a similar printing process in Europe. The thousands of books and millions of pages printed in Song China before and after 1126/1127 are evidence that a remarkably high degree of its population was literate.

In addition to this dramatic rise in basic literacy, there were significant developments in advanced philosophy. Intellectuals reinvigorated Confucian thought by injecting into it metaphysical concepts borrowed from Buddhism and Daoism. This new Study of the Way, or *Neo-Confucianism*, provided fresh philosophical insights clothed in traditional forms and enabled Confucianism to topple Buddhism from its position of intellectual preeminence.

The fine arts also reached new levels of achievement. Landscape painting, particularly during the era of Southern Song, expressed in two dimensions the mystical visions of Daoism and Chan Buddhism. On a three-dimensional plane, the craft of porcelain-making became a high art, and large numbers of exquisitely delicate pieces of fine *chinaware* were traded from Japan to East Africa.

Advanced ships and navigational aids enabled Chinese traders to take to the sea in unprecedented numbers, especially in the direction of Southeast Asia, thereby transforming their homeland into the world's greatest merchant marine power of its day. Rapid-maturing strains of rice were introduced from Champa in Southeast Asia, making it possible to feed a population that exceeded one hundred million, about double that of the age of Tang. Although most of this massive population was engaged in traditional, labor-intensive agriculture, some Chinese were employed in industries (such as mining, iron and steel production, and textile

manufacture) that used advanced technologies unequaled anywhere else in the world.

Song's age of greatness was brought to a close by *Mongol* invaders, who by 1279 had joined all of China to the largest land empire in world history. Mongol rule during what is known as the *Yuan Dynasty* (1271–1368) was unmitigated military occupation. Both the Mongols and the many foreigners whom they admitted into their service exploited and oppressed the Chinese. Although the Mongols encouraged agriculture and trade, few Chinese benefited from a prosperity that was largely confined to a small circle of landlords.

By the mid fourteenth century China was in rebellion, and in 1368 a commoner, Zhu Yuanzhang, re-established native rule in the form of the *Ming Dynasty* (1368–1644). This new imperial family restored Chinese prestige and influence in East Asia to levels enjoyed under Tang and provided China with stability and prosperity until the late sixteenth century. Under the Ming traditional Chinese civilization attained full maturity. Toward the middle of the age of Ming, however, China reluctantly established relations with seaborne Western European merchants and missionaries, and the resultant challenge of the West would result, centuries later, in major transformations in Chinese life.

Chapters 2 and 3 (Vol. B) will deal with the Yuan and Ming eras. For the moment we will concentrate on Tang and Song, two of China's most celebrated Golden Ages.

Open to the World: Christianity in Tang China



69 ▼ Bishop Adam, *THE CHRISTIAN MONUMENT*

The revived Silk Road provided missionaries, as well as merchants, with a convenient route into the heart of Tang China. In 635 a *Nestorian* Christian bishop from Persia named Aluoben (Abraham?) arrived in Chang'an, China's capital city. In the fifth century the Nestorian Christians of Syria, who drew a sharp distinction between the human and divine natures of Jesus, had been declared *heretics* (deviant believers) by the imperial Roman Church. The charges of heresy were motivated more by political considerations than theological doctrine, but the result was no less devastating. The Nestorians were effectively denied a place within the imperial Christian Church that looked to Constantinople and Rome as its twin centers of authority. Moving east, the Nestorians found a home in the Sassanid Empire of Persia. Despite sporadic persecution by the Sassanid *shahs*, or emperors, who promoted Zoroastrianism as the state religion, Nestorianism flourished in Sassanid Persia's two major cultural centers: Mesopotamia (also called *Babylonia*) and Iran. From there Nestorian Christian ideas traveled farther east to the Turkic peoples of Inner Asia and finally to China. Bishop Aluoben was not the first Nestorian to reach China, but he is the first of whom we have any record.

Aluoben was fortunate that he arrived in the reign of *Tang Taizong* (r. 626–649), the second Tang emperor. Of mixed Chinese and Turko-Mongol descent, Tang Taizong was open to novelties from the western steppes, including Buddhism, Manichaeism, and Nestorian Christianity. Under the emperor's

protection, Aluoben established a monastery, which initially housed twenty-one monks, probably all of them Persians.

In 781 a scholar-bishop named Adam, who also bore the Chinese name Jing Jing, composed a short history of the early fortunes of the Nestorian Church in China. Under the patronage of a prominent Chinese-born Nestorian of Persian descent named Yazdbozid, whose Chinese name was Yisi, Adam's history was then inscribed on a nine-foot-high stone memorial that bears the heading, "A Monument Commemorating the Propagation of the Daqin (Syrian) Luminous Religion in the Middle Kingdom (China)." Interestingly, Yazdbozid, who apparently was Adam's father, was an assistant bishop in the Nestorian Church and had formerly served as a high-ranking general in the Chinese army and an imperial civil official. The career of this Christian priest, warrior, and civil servant of Persian heritage nicely illustrates the cosmopolitanism of early Tang, in which non-Chinese were called to the imperial service. Yazdbozid is also a symbol of the Nestorian Church's eighth-century political connections, which gave it a measure of influence in Tang China.

That good fortune did not last, however. By tying its fortunes to the patronage of the Tang emperors, this minor foreign religion suffered irreversible losses when the empire waged an assault on foreign religions between 840 and 846. Although some small communities possibly survived, Nestorian Christianity essentially disappeared in China by the late tenth century. It would only reappear in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, brought in from Central Asia by various Turkic tribes that had adopted the faith. But it would suffer a second eclipse in the fourteenth century with the rise of the antforeign Ming Dynasty.

Regardless of future reverses, the Nestorian community's *Christian Monument* celebrates an age when China was open to foreign innovations, including this faith from Southwest Asia.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. Review source 23 in Chapter 4. How does Adam borrow Daoist imagery and terms to describe Nestorian Christianity? Why do you think he does so?
2. Can you find any Buddhist and Confucian overtones in this memorial? How and why does Adam use them?
3. What reasons did Emperor Tang Taizong give for allowing this new religion into his empire? What does your answer suggest about the man and his reign?
4. How does the memorial deal with the issue of its reverses under Empress Wu? What do you infer from your answer?
5. What do those assaults on Nestorian Christianity suggest to you?
6. How does the memorial describe its imperial patrons? What do you infer from your answer?
7. At the apex of the monument is an ornate engraved cross, which rises from a white cloud, a symbol of Daoism, and beneath the cloud is a Buddhist lotus blossom. In light of the text of the memorial, what do you think this carved image means?

"The Way" would not have spread so widely had it not been for the Sage,¹ and the Sage would not have been so great were it not for "The Way." Ever since the Sage and "The Way" were united to gather as the two halves of an indentured deed would agree,² then the world became refined and enlightened.

When the accomplished Emperor Taizong began his magnificent career in glory and splendor over the (recently) established dynasty³ and ruled his people with intelligence, he proved himself to be a brilliant Sage.

And behold there was a highly virtuous man named Aluoben in the Kingdom of Daqin.⁴ Auguring (of the Sage, i.e., Emperor) from the azure sky,⁵ he decided to carry the true Sutras⁶ (of the True Way) with him, and observing the course of the winds, he made his way (to China) through difficulties and perils. Thus in the ninth year of the period named Zhenguan (635 C.E.) he arrived at Chang'an.⁷ The Emperor dispatched his Minister, Duke Fang Xuanling, with a guard of honor, to the western suburb to meet the visitor and conduct him to the Palace. The Sutras (Scriptures) were translated in the Imperial Library. (His Majesty) investigated "The Way" in his own forbidden apartments,⁸ and being deeply convinced of its correctness and truth, he gave special orders for its propagation.

In the twelfth year of the Zhenguan Period (638 C.E.) in the seventh month of Autumn, the following Imperial Rescript was issued: —

"'The Way' had not, at all times and in all places, the selfsame name; the Sage had not, at all times and in all places, the selfsame human body. (Heaven) caused a suitable religion to be instituted for every region and clime so that each one of the races of mankind might be saved. Bishop Aluoben of the kingdom of Daqin, bringing with him the Sutras and Images,⁹ has come from afar and presented them at our Capital. Having carefully examined the scope of his teaching, we find it to be mysteriously spiritual and of silent operation. Having observed its principal and most essential points, we reached the conclusion that they cover all that is most important in life. Their language is free from perplexing expressions; their principles are so simple that they 'remain as the fish would remain even after the net (of the language) were forgotten.' This Teaching is helpful to all creatures and beneficial to all men. So let it have free course throughout the Empire."

Accordingly, the proper authorities built a Daqin monastery in the Yining Ward¹⁰ in the Capital and twenty-one priests were ordained and attached to it. The virtue of the honored House of Zhou had died away;¹¹ (the rider on) the black chariot had ascended to the West.¹² But (virtue revived) and "The Way" was brilliantly manifested again at the moment when the Great Tang began its rule, whilst the breezes of the Luminous (Religion) came eastward to fan it.¹³ Immediately afterwards, the proper officials were

¹Emperor Tang Taizong.

²Just as the two copies of a legal contract executed in duplicate would agree in all respects.

³A great warrior even in his teens, Tang Taizong (his given name was Li Shimin) was the driving force that toppled the short-lived *Sui Dynasty* (581–618) and placed his father, Li Yuan, on the throne as first Tang emperor. His father later abdicated the throne in Li Shimin's favor.

⁴Syria. We should not take it literally. Aluoben came from the West with a religion that was shaped in Syria. Thus Iran, Mesopotamia, and Syria are all lumped together under this term.

⁵He discovered in the heavens signs of the Sage Emperor.

⁶The Bible.

⁷Tang China's capital, Chang'an (known today as Xi'an), was the largest and richest city in the world in the seventh century.

⁸The private imperial chambers.

⁹Artistic representations, or *icons*, of Jesus and the saints.

¹⁰The name of a street in the western part of the city.

¹¹Rule by virtue, as established in the early Zhou Dynasty and later taught by Confucius, had departed long before the rise of Tang.

¹²According to one tradition, when the Eastern Zhou Dynasty (770–256 B.C.E.) lost its virtue, Laozi, the founder of Daoism, abandoned China in disgust. He went west (or ascended to the Western Heaven) in a chariot drawn by a black ox, thereby leaving China without a moral guide. The Tang Dynasty shared Laozi's family name, Li, and claimed descent from him.

¹³Laozi had gone west (note 12); now the Way was returning from the West.

again ordered to take a faithful portrait of the Emperor, and to have it copied on the walls of the monastery. The celestial beauty appeared in its variegated colors, and the dazzling splendor illuminated the Luminous "portals" (i.e., congregation). The sacred features (lit., foot-prints) (thus preserved) conferred great blessing (on the monastery), and illuminated the Church for evermore. . . .

The great Emperor Gaozong (650–683 C.E.) succeeded most respectfully to his ancestors; and giving the True Religion the proper elegance and finish, he caused monasteries of the Luminous Religion to be founded in every prefecture. Accordingly, he honored Aluoben by conferring on him the office of the Great Patron and Spiritual Lord of the Empire. The Law (of the Luminous Religion) spread throughout the ten provinces, and the Empire enjoyed great peace and concord. Monasteries were built in many cities, whilst every family enjoyed the great blessings (of Salvation).

During the period of Shengli (698–699 C.E.),¹⁴ the Buddhists, taking advantage of these circumstances, and using all their strength raised their voices (against the Luminous Religion) in the Eastern Zhou,¹⁵ and at the end of the Xiandian Period (712 C.E.)¹⁶ some inferior scholars¹⁷ ridiculed and derided it, slandering and speaking against it in the Western Hao.¹⁸ But there came the Head-priest (or Archdeacon) Luohan,¹⁹ Bishop Jilie,²⁰ and others, as well as Noblemen

from the "Golden" region²¹ and the eminent priests who had forsaken all worldly interests. All these men co-operated in restoring the great fundamental principles and united together to re-bind the broken ties.

The Emperor Xuanzong,²² who was surnamed "the Perfection of the Way," ordered the Royal prince, the King of Ningguo and four other Royal princes to visit the blessed edifices (i.e., monastery) personally and to set up altars therein. Thus the "consecrated rafters," which had been temporarily bent, were once more straightened and strengthened, whilst the sacred foundation-stones which for a time had lost the right position were restored and perfected. In the early part of the period Tianbao (742 C.E.) he gave orders to his general Gao Lishi to carry the faithful portraits of the Five Emperors²³ and to have them placed securely in the monastery, and also to take the Imperial gift of one hundred pieces of silk with him. Making the most courteous and reverent obeisance to the Imperial portraits, we feel as though "we were in a position to hang on to the Imperial bow and sword, in case the beard of the Dragon should be out of reach."²⁴ Although the solar horns²⁵ shine forth with such dazzling brilliance, yet the gracious Imperial faces are so gentle that they may be gazed upon at a distance less than a foot.

In the third year of the same period (744 C.E.) there was a priest named Jihe²⁶ in the Kingdom of Daqin. Observing the stars, he decided to en-

¹⁴One of several periods in the reign of Empress Wu, who ruled the empire in her own name from 690 to 705. She had gained effective control over the state around 654, but at first used several puppet emperors to mask her power.

¹⁵Empress Wu changed the name of her short-lived dynasty to *Zhou* and moved her primary capital east to Luoyang, the capital city of the ancient Eastern Zhou Dynasty (770–256 B.C.E.). She declared Buddhism the official state religion in 691 and seems to have encouraged persecution of Christianity, although persecution did not become an articulated state policy. In 698 a mob sacked the Nestorian church in Luoyang.

¹⁶The last year of disorder following Empress Wu's retirement in 705.

¹⁷Probably Confucians, but possibly Daoists. Maybe both.

¹⁸*Hao* was the name of Chang'an when it was the capital of the Western Zhou Dynasty (ca. 1100–771 B.C.E.). Hostile

crowds attacked and violated the monastery in the Yining Ward, which Tang Taizong had patronized.

¹⁹Abraham.

²⁰Gabriel?

²¹From the West, the source of so much gold and silver that flowed into Tang China by virtue of China's favorable balance of trade.

²²Under Emperor Xuanzong (r. 712–756) Tang China reached the heights of its greatness and prosperity. See source 70, note 3.

²³The legendary Five Sage Emperors, who established the foundations of Chinese civilization in predynastic times.

²⁴Although the emperor (the dragon) might be far away, his power extends to the monastery.

²⁵The radiance emanating from the faces of the Five Sage Emperors.

²⁶George.

gage in the work of conversion; and looking toward the sun (i.e., eastward), he came to pay court to the most honorable Emperor. The Imperial orders were given to the Head-priest (Archdeacon) Luohan, priest Pulun²⁷ and others, seven in all, to perform services to cultivate merit and virtue with this Bishop Jihe in the Xingqing Palace. Thereupon the monastery-names, composed and written by the Emperor himself, began to appear on the monastery gates; and the front-tablets to bear the Dragon-writing (i.e., the Imperial hand-writing).²⁸ The monastery was resorted to by (visitors) whose costumes resembled the shining feathers of the king-fisher bird whilst all (the buildings) shone forth with

the splendor of the sun. The Imperial tablets hung high in the air and their radiance flamed as though vying with the sun. The gifts of the Imperial favor are immense like the highest peak of the highest mountains in the South, and the food of its rich benevolence is as deep as the depths of the Eastern sea.

There is nothing that “The Way” cannot effect (through the Sage); and whatever it effects, it is right of us to define it as such (in eulogy). There is nothing that the Sage cannot accomplish (through “The Way”); and whatever He accomplishes, it is right we should proclaim it in writing (as the Sage’s work).

²⁷Paul?

²⁸The emperor composed an inscription to be fixed above

the monastery’s door. Almost all public buildings in China had similar inscriptions.

Troubles in Late Tang



70 ▼ *Du Fu, POEMS*

The Chinese consider the eighth century their golden age of classical poetry. Among the century’s many great poets, three are universally recognized as China’s preeminent poetic geniuses: the Buddhist Wang Wei (699–759), the Daoist Li Bo (701–762), and the Confucian Du Fu (712–770). Despite their differences in personality and perspective, they knew, deeply respected, and genuinely liked one another. Of the three, the Chinese most esteem Du Fu, primarily for the tone of compassion for the downtrodden that pervades his poetry.

Du Fu himself knew adversity. Despite his extraordinary erudition, he was denied a position of public responsibility and spent much of his adult life as an impoverished wanderer and farmer. He lived to see one of his children die of starvation and suffered through the destruction of General An Lushan’s rebellion (755–763), a civil war from which the Tang regime never recovered. Despite these adversities, Du Fu never lost his love for humanity or his belief in the innate goodness of the common person.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. According to Du Fu, what costs have the Chinese paid for their empire?
Has it been worth it? What does he think of military glory?
2. From a Confucian perspective, what is wrong with eighth-century China?
3. Can you find any Daoist sentiments in these poems?

4. What do the second and third poems tell us about the economic and social consequences of An Lushan's rebellion?
5. In what ways do the first two poems seem to suggest that Du Fu believed that the Tang emperor might be losing the *Mandate of Heaven* (Chapter 1, source 5)?
6. One of the prime virtues of Confucianism is *ren*, which is best translated as "humaneness." The character for this word is composed of two elements: the signs for *person* and *two*. In what ways do these poems, especially the third poem, exemplify the qualities of *ren*?

BALLAD OF THE WAR CHARIOTS

The jingle of war chariots,
Horses neighing, men marching,
Bows and arrows slung over hips;
Beside them stumbling, running
The mass of parents, wives and children
Clogging up the road, their rising dust
Obscuring the great bridge at Hsienyang;
Stamping their feet, weeping
In utter desperation with cries
That seem to reach the clouds;

Ask a soldier: Why do you go?
Would simply bring the answer:
Today men are conscripted often;
Fifteen-year-olds sent up the Yellow River
To fight; men of forty marched away
To colonize the western frontier;
Village elders take young boys,
Do up their hair like adults
To get them off; if they return
It will be white with age, but even then
They may be sent off to the frontier again;

Frontiers on which enough blood has flowed
To make a sea, yet our Emperor still would
Expand his authority! Have you not heard
How east of Huashan¹ many counties
Are desolate with weeds and thorns?
The strongest women till the fields,
Yet crops come not as well as before;

Lads from around here are well known
For their bravery, but hate to be driven
Like dogs or chickens; only because
You kindly ask me do I dare give vent
To grievances; now for instance
With the men from the western frontier
Still not returned, the government
Demands immediate payment of taxes,
But how can we pay when so little
Has been produced?

Now, we peasants have learnt one thing:
To have a son is not so good as having
A daughter who can marry a neighbor
And still be near us, while a son
Will be taken away to die in some
Wild place, his bones joining those
That lie bleached white on the shores
Of Lake Kokonor,² where voices of new spirits
Join with the old, heard sadly through
The murmur of falling rain.

THINKING OF OTHER DAYS

In those prosperous times
Of the period of Kai Yuan,³
Even a small county city
Would be crowded with the rich;
Rice flowed like oil and both
Public and private granaries
Were stuffed with grain; all

¹The land back home, east of the western frontier.

²A lake west of the Great Wall.

³A title of Emperor Xuanzong (r. 712–756). Also known as *Minghuang*, or Brilliant Monarch, he was the last effec-

tive Tang emperor and a great patron of the arts. The rebellion of General An Lushan broke out during the last years of his forty-four-year reign.

Through the nine provinces
 There were no robbers on
 The roads; traveling from home
 Needless to pick an auspicious
 Day to start; everywhere carriages
 With folk wearing silk or brocade;
 Farmers ploughed, women picked
 Mulberries, nothing that did
 Not run smoothly; in court
 Was a good Emperor for whom
 The finest music was played;
 Friends were honest with each other
 And for long there had been
 No kind of disaster; great days with
 Rites and songs, the best of other times,
 Laws the most just; who could
 Have dreamed that later a bolt
 Of silk would cost ten thousand
 Cash? Now the fields farmers
 Tilled have become covered
 With bloodshed; palaces at Luoyang⁴
 Are burnt, and temples to
 The imperial ancestors are full
 Of foxes and rabbit burrows!
 Now I am too sad to ask
 Questions of the old people,
 Fearing to hear tales
 Of horror and strife;
 I am not able, but yet

The Emperor⁵ has given me
 A post, I hoping that he
 Can make the country
 Rise again like King Xuan
 Of Zhou,⁶ though for myself
 I simply grieve that now age
 And sickness take their toll.

ON ASKING MR. WU FOR THE SECOND TIME

Do please let your neighbor
 Who lives to the west of you
 Pick up the dates in front of
 Your home; for she is a woman
 Without food or children; only
 Her condition brings her to
 This necessity; surely she
 Ought not to fear you, because
 You are not a local man, yet
 It would be good of you to try
 And help her, and save her
 Feelings; so do not fence off
 Your fruit; heavy taxation is
 The cause of her misery; the
 Effect of war on the helpless
 Brings us unending sorrow.

⁴The auxiliary capital and one of China's most sacred and ancient cities.

⁵Xuanzong's son and successor.

⁶The last effective king of the Western Zhou Dynasty, he spent most of his reign (827–781 B.C.E.) fighting defensive wars against non-Chinese to the north.

The Dao of Agriculture in Song China



71 ▼ *Chen Pu, THE CRAFT OF FARMING*

China has continually faced the problem of producing sufficient food to meet the needs of an expanding population. During the Song Era the Chinese met this challenge with reasonable success, despite a steep increase in population, whereby China's probable 50 to 60 million in the early 700s grew to about 120 million by about 1200. This success was partially due to an activist agenda by the central government, which encouraged land reclamation through tax incentives and published illustrated handbooks that promoted up-to-date agricultural technol-

ogy. The following selections from a popular treatise written in 1149 by the otherwise unknown Chen Pu provide insight into the manner in which Song China approached the problem of feeding itself adequately.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. What does Chen Pu assume is more scarce, and consequently more valuable, labor or land? What do you infer from your answer?
2. Chen Pu focuses on several key elements that contributed to Song China's success in feeding its people. What are they?
3. According to Chen Pu, which qualities set the superior farmer apart from all others?
4. It has been said that this treatise focuses more on producing a superior farmer than a superior farm. What does this mean, and do you agree? If you agree, what do you find so distinctly Chinese about such a goal?
5. In what way is this treatise a combination of agricultural science, folk wisdom, Confucian learning, and Daoist ideology? Can you find any Legalist elements in the essay?

FINANCE AND LABOR

All those who engage in business should do so in accordance with their own capacity. They should refrain from careless investment and excessive greed, lest in the end they achieve nothing. . . . In the farming business, which is the most difficult business to manage, how can you afford not to calculate your financial and labor capacities carefully? Only when you are certain that you have sufficient funds and labor to assure success should you launch an enterprise. Anyone who covets more than he can manage is likely to fall into carelessness and irresponsibility. . . . Thus, to procure more land is to increase trouble, not profit.

On the other hand, anyone who plans carefully, begins with good methods, and continues in the same way can reasonably expect success and does not have to rely on luck. The proverb says, "Owning a great deal of emptiness is less desirable than reaping from a narrow patch of

land." . . . For the farmer who is engaged in the management of fields, the secret lies not in expanding the farmland, but in balancing finance and labor. If the farmer can achieve that, he can expect prosperity and abundance. . . .

PLOWING

Early and late plowing both have their advantages. For the early rice crop,¹ as soon as the reaping is completed, immediately plow the fields and expose the stalks to glaring sunlight. Then add manure and bury the stalks to nourish the soil. Next, plant beans, wheat, and vegetables to ripen and fertilize the soil so as to minimize the next year's labor. In addition, when the harvest is good, these extra crops can add to the yearly income. For late crops, however, do not plow until spring. Because the rice stalks are soft but tough, it is necessary to wait until they have fully decayed to plow satisfactorily. . . .

¹Rice became a central part of the Chinese diet in the Song Era, thanks to the introduction of early ripening, drought-resistant strains from Southeast Asia. These new seeds made

it possible to grow the crop in areas that previously had been unsuitable for rice cultivation.

THE SIX KINDS OF CROPS

There is an order to the planting of different crops. Anyone who knows the right timing and follows the order can cultivate one thing after another, and use one to assist the others. Then there will not be a day without planting, nor a month without harvest, and money will be coming in throughout the year. How can there then be any worry about cold, hunger, or lack of funds?

Plant the nettle-hemp in the first month. Apply manure in intervals of ten days and by the fifth or sixth month it will be time for reaping. The women should take charge of knotting and spinning cloth out of the hemp.

Plant millet in the second month. It is necessary to sow the seeds sparsely and then roll cart wheels over the soil to firm it up; this will make the millet grow luxuriantly, its stalks long and its grains full. In the seventh month the millet will be harvested, easing any temporary financial difficulties.

There are two crops of oil-hemp. The early crop is planted in the third month. Rake the field to spread out the seedlings. Repeat the raking process three times a month and the hemp will grow well. It can be harvested in the seventh or the eighth month.

In the fourth month plant beans. Rake as with hemp. They will be ripe by the seventh month.

In mid-fifth month plant the late oil-hemp. Proceed as with the early crop. The ninth month will be reaping time.

After the 7th day of the seventh month, plant radishes and cabbage.

In the eighth month, before the autumn sacrifice to the god of the earth, wheat can be planted. It is advisable to apply manure and remove weeds frequently. When wheat grows from the autumn through the spring sacrifices to the god of the earth, the harvest will double and the grains will be full and solid.

The *Book of Poetry* says, "The tenth month is the time to harvest crops." You will have a large variety of crops, including millet, rice, beans, hemp, and wheat and will lack nothing needed through the year. Will you ever be concerned for want of resources? . . .

FERTILIZER

At the side of the farm house, erect a compost hut. Make the eaves low to prevent the wind and rain from entering it, for when the compost is exposed to the moon and the stars, it will lose its fertility. In this hut, dig a deep pit and line it with bricks to prevent leakage. Collect waste, ashes, chaff, broken stalks, and fallen leaves and burn them in the pit; then pour manure over them to make them fertile. In this way considerable quantities of compost are acquired over time. Then, whenever sowing is to be done, sieve and discard stones and tiles, mix the fine compost with the seeds, and plant them sparsely in pinches. When the seedlings have grown tall, again sprinkle the compost and bank it up against the roots. These methods will ensure a double yield.

Some people say that when the soil is exhausted, grass and trees will not grow; that when the *qi*² is weak, all living things will be stunted; and that after three to five years of continuous planting, the soil of any field will be exhausted. This theory is erroneous because it fails to recognize one factor: by adding new, fertile soil, enriched with compost, the land can be reinforced in strength. If this is so, where can the alleged exhaustion come from?

WEEDING

The *Book of Poetry* says, "Root out the weeds. Where the weeds decay, there the grains will grow luxuriantly." The author of the *Record of Ritual* also remarks, "The months of mid-summer

²Vital energy or material force. *Qi* was a construct of *Neo-Confucian* philosophers (source 74) who envisioned a cos-

mos in which all entities are composed of *li* (its moral Principle or pattern) and *qi* (its driving force).

are advantageous for weeding. Weeds can fertilize the fields and improve the land." Modern farmers, ignorant of these principles, throw the weeds away. They do not know that, if mixed with soil and buried deep under the roots of rice seedlings, the weeds will eventually decay and the soil will be enriched; the harvest, as a result, will be abundant and of superior quality. . . .

CONCENTRATION

If something is thought out carefully, it will succeed; if not, it will fail; this is a universal truth.

It is very rare that a person works and yet gains nothing. On the other hand, there is never any harm in trying too hard.

In farming it is especially appropriate to be concerned about what you are doing. Mencius said, "Will a farmer discard his plow when he leaves his land?" Ordinary people will become idle if they have leisure and prosperity. Only those who love farming, who behave in harmony with it, who take pleasure in talking about it and think about it all the time will manage it without a moment's negligence. For these people a day's work results in a day's gain, a year's work in a year's gain. How can they escape affluence?

Thirteenth-Century Hangzhou



72 ▼ A RECORD OF MUSINGS ON THE EASTERN CAPITAL

When Rurchen steppe-people overran all of northern China in the early twelfth century and established the rival *Jin Dynasty* (1115–1234) with its capital at Beijing, the Song imperial court fled from its capital at Kaifeng to the port city of *Hangzhou*, just south of the Yangzi River. From here the Song ruled over the southern remnants of their mutilated empire until Mongols captured the city in 1276.

Southern Song (1127–1279) presided over territory that in the age of Tang had been a pestilential borderland. By the twelfth century, however, it was China's most densely populated region and the newest hub of Chinese culture. Its heart was Hangzhou, which was more than merely an administrative center. In the thirteenth century it was home to well over one million people (some estimates reach as high as two and one-half million), who inhabited an area of seven to eight square miles, making it the largest and richest city in the world. Marco Polo, who visited the city on several occasions in the late thirteenth century, knew Hangzhou by the name *Kinsai*, which he translated as "City of Heaven." According to Polo, travelers to the city were so captivated by it that they could scarcely wait to return.

The following account, composed anonymously in 1235, describes the city and its residents.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. How prosperous and varied does the city's economy appear to be?
2. What adjectives would you use to characterize this city?

3. Compare life in Hangzhou with that in a modern metropolis, such as New York or Los Angeles. What would a modern urban dweller or visitor recognize as familiar in this thirteenth-century city?

MARKETS

During the morning hours, markets extend from Tranquility Gate of the palace all the way to the north and south sides of the New Boulevard. Here we find pearl, jade, talismans, exotic plants and fruits, seasonal catches from the sea, wild game — all the rarities of the world seem to be gathered here. The food and commodity markets at the Heavenly-View Gate, River Market Place, Central Square, Ba Creek, the end of Superior Lane, Tent Place, and Universal Peace Bridge are all crowded and full of traffic.

In the evening, with the exception of the square in front of the palace, the markets are as busy as during the day. The most attractive one is at Central Square, where all sorts of exquisite artifacts, instruments, containers, and hundreds of varieties of goods are for sale. In other marketplaces, sales, auctions, and exchanges go on constantly. In the wine shops and inns business also thrives. Only after the fourth drum¹ does the city gradually quiet down, but by the fifth drum, court officials already start preparing for audiences and merchants are getting ready for the morning market again. This cycle goes on all year round without respite. . . .

On the lot in front of the wall of the city building, there are always various acting troupes performing, and this usually attracts a large crowd. The same kind of activity is seen in almost any vacant lot, including those at the meat market of the Great Common, the herb market at Charcoal Bridge, the book market at Orange Grove, the vegetable market on the east side of the city, and the rice market on the north side. There are many more interesting markets, such as the candy

center at the Five Buildings, but I cannot name them all.

COMMERCIAL ESTABLISHMENTS

In general, the capital attracts the greatest variety of goods and has the best craftsmen. For instance, the flower company at Superior Lane does a truly excellent job of flower arrangement, and its caps, hairpins, and collars are unsurpassed in craftsmanship. Some of the most famous specialties of the capital are the sweet-bean soup at the Miscellaneous Market, the pickled dates of the Ge family, the thick soup of the Guang family at Superior Lane, the fruit at the Great Commons marketplace, the cooked meats in front of Eternal Mercy Temple, Sister Song's fish broth at Penny Pond Gate, the juicy lungs at Flowing Gold Gate, the "lamb rice" of the Zhi family at Central Square, the boots of the Peng family, the fine clothing of the Xuan family at Southern Commons, the sticky rice pastry of the Zhang family, the flutes made by Gu the Fourth, and the Qiu family's Tatar whistles at the Great Commons.

WINE SHOPS

Among the various kinds of wine shops, the tea-and-food shops sell not only wine, but also various foods to go with it. However, to get seasonal delicacies not available in these shops, one should go to the inns, for they also have a menu from which one can make selections. The pastry-and-wine shops sell pastries with duckling and goose fillings, various fixings of pig

¹The night was divided into five *watches*, each of which was signaled by a drumbeat.

tripe, intestines and blood, fish fat and spawn; but they are rather expensive. The mansion-style inns are either decorated in the same way as officials' mansions or are actually remodeled from such mansions. The garden-style inns are often located in the suburbs, though some are also situated in town. Their decoration is usually an imitation of a studio-garden combination. Among other kinds of wine shops are the straight ones which do not sell food. There are also the small retail wine shops which sell house wine as well as wine from other stores. Instead of the common emblem — a painted branching twig — used by all other winehouses, they have bamboo fences and canvas awnings. To go drinking in such a place is called "hitting the cup," meaning that a person drinks only one cup; it is therefore not the most respectable place and is unfit for polite company.

The "luxuriant inns" have prostitutes residing in them, and the wine chambers are equipped with beds. At the gate of such an inn, on top of the red gardenia lantern, there is always a cover made of bamboo leaves. Rain or shine, this cover is always present, serving as a trademark. In other inns, the girls only keep the guests company. If a guest has other wishes, he has to go to the girl's place. . . .

The expenses incurred on visiting an inn can vary widely. If you order food, but no drinks, it is called "having the lowly soup-and-stuff," and is quite inexpensive. If your order of wine and food falls within the range of 100–5,000 cash,² it is called a small order. However, if you ask for female company, then it is most likely that the girls will order the most expensive delicacies. You are well advised to appear shrewd and experienced, so as not to be robbed. One trick, for instance, in ordering wines is to give a large order, of say, ten bottles, but open them one by one. In the end, you will probably have used only five or

six bottles of the best. You can then return the rest. . . .

TEAHOUSES

In large teahouses there are usually paintings and calligraphies by famous artists on display. In the old capital,³ only restaurants had them, to enable their patrons to while away the time as the food was being prepared, but now it is customary for teahouses as well to display paintings and the like. . . .

Often many young men gather in teahouses to practice singing or playing musical instruments. To give such amateur performances is called "getting posted."

A "social teahouse" is more of a community gathering place than a mere place that sells tea. Often tea-drinking is but an excuse, and people are rather generous when it comes to the tips.

There is a special kind of teahouse where pimps and gigolos hang out. Another kind is occupied by people from various trades and crafts who use them as places to hire help, buy apprentices, and conduct business. These teahouses are called "trade heads."

"Water teahouses" are in fact pleasure houses, the tea being a cover. Some youths are quite willing to spend their money there, which is called "dry tea money." . . .

SPECIALTY STORES

The commercial area of the capital extends from the old Qing River Market to the Southern Commons on the south and to the border on the north. It includes the Central Square, which is also called the Center of Five Flowers. From the north side of the Five Buildings to South Imperial Boulevard, there are more than one hundred gold, silver, and money exchanges. On the short walls

²The basic unit of currency was the *cash*, a copper coin with a square hole in the middle. These were strung together in groups of hundreds and thousands. Late in the century, the government was circulating bank notes, backed by gold

and silver, ranging in value from one thousand to one hundred thousand cash coins.

³Kaifeng, which was captured in 1126.

in front of these stores, there are piles of gold, silver, and copper cash: these are called "the money that watches over the store." Around these exchanges there are also numerous gold- and silversmiths. The pearl marts are situated between the north side of Cordial Marketplace and Southtown Marketplace. Most deals made here involve over 10,000 cash. A score of pawnshops are scattered in between, all owned by very wealthy people and dealing only in the most valuable objects.

Some famous fabric stores sell exquisite brocade and fine silk which are unsurpassed elsewhere in the country. Along the river, close to the Peaceful Ford Bridge, there are numerous fabric stores, fan shops, and lacquerware and porcelain shops. Most other cities can only boast of one special product; what makes the capital unique is that it gathers goods from all places. Furthermore, because of the large population and busy commercial traffic, there is a demand for everything. There are even shops that deal exclusively in used paper or in feathers, for instance.

WAREHOUSES

In Liu Yong's (ca. 1045) poem on Qiantang, we read that there were about ten thousand families residing here; but that was before the Yuanfeng reign (1078–1085). Today, having been the "temporary capital" for more than a hundred years,⁴ the city has over a million households. The suburbs extend to the south, west, and north; all are densely populated and prosperous in commerce as well as in agriculture. The size of the suburbs is comparable to a small county or prefecture, and it takes several days to travel through them. This again reflects the prosperity of the capital.

In the middle of the city, enclosed by the Northern Pass Dam, is White Ocean Lake. Its water spreads over several tens of *li*.⁵ Wealthy families have built scores of warehouse complexes along this waterfront. Each of these consists of several hundred to over a thousand rooms for the storage needs of the various businesses in the capital and of traveling merchants. Because these warehouses are surrounded by water, they are not endangered by fires or thieves, and therefore they offer a special convenience.

HUSTLERS

Some of these hustlers are students who failed to achieve any literary distinction. Though able to read and write, and play musical instruments and chess, they are not highly skilled in any art. They end up being a kind of guide for young men from wealthy families, accompanying them in their pleasure-seeking activities. Some also serve as guides or assistants to officials on business from other parts of the country. The lowliest of these people actually engage themselves in writing and delivering invitation cards and the like for brothels. . . .

There are also professional go-betweens, nicknamed "water-treaders," whose principal targets are pleasure houses, where they flatter the wealthy young patrons, run errands for them, and help make business deals. Some gather at brothels or scenic attractions and accost the visitors. They beg for donations for "religious purposes," but in fact use the money to make a living for themselves and their families. If you pay attention to them, they will become greedy; if you ignore them, they will force themselves on you and will not stop until you give in. It requires art to deal with these people appropriately.

⁴The Song emperors never gave up hope of recovering Kaifeng and the northern part of the empire. Kaifeng thus remained the official capital, and Hangzhou was designated the *temporary capital*.

⁵A *li* is a bit more than one-third of a mile.

Buddhism in East Asia: Acceptance, Rejection, and Accommodation

Buddhism spread out of India and into East Asia about the same time that the Mahayana Doctrine was transforming the teachings of the Buddha into a popular religion. Following branches of the Silk Road out of northwest India, Mahayana Buddhism traveled through Central Asia and into the heartland of northern China, reaching the Middle Kingdom as early as the reign of Emperor Han Mingdi (58–75 C.E.). Initially, however, Buddhism made little progress in China because some of its practices, such as monasticism and celibacy (rejection of marriage), and its basic otherworldliness ran counter to two primary Chinese qualities: emphasis on the centrality of the family and preoccupation with this world. The few early inroads Buddhism made in China occurred largely because some Chinese initially were able to equate it with Daoism, whereby they perceived Nirvana to be the equivalent of the Daoist principle of active nonaction (*wuwei*), and they translated *Dharma* (the Law of Righteousness) as *Dao* (the Way). In the time of troubles that followed the collapse of Later Han in 220, however, Buddhism, especially in its Mahayana form, achieved its own place in China as a religious doctrine offering comfort in the face of affliction.

From China, Buddhist ideas were introduced into Korea by the fourth century, into Japan in the sixth, and later into Tibet, Mongolia, and northern regions of Southeast Asia. In each of these regions Mahayana Buddhism took deep root and became a living part of its host civilization. As the following sources suggest, however, the story of Buddhism's spread through East Asia was not a simple one. As it traveled, Buddhism absorbed local ideas and styles, which in turn were passed on to a neighboring culture, which then adapted the received ideas and styles to suit its own needs and perceptions (for example, see Chapter 5, source 41). Yet, even when adapted to a preexisting culture, Buddhist ideas and ways could and did face local resistance, especially in China. Despite resistance, even solidly secular China was forced to come to grips with Buddhist metaphysics, and despite several attempts to suppress the religion, China assimilated Buddhism's basic concepts, deities, rituals, artistic motifs, and festivals into its everyday culture. Along with Confucianism, Daoism, and Legalism, Buddhism became one of the major pillars of Chinese civilization.

A Conflict of Values: Foreign Religions in Late Tang China



73 ▼ *Han Yu, MEMORIAL ON BUDDHISM, and Emperor Tang Wuzong, PROCLAMATION ORDERING THE DESTRUCTION OF THE BUDDHIST MONASTERIES*

Chinese Buddhism reached its high point of popularity and influence during the early years of the Tang Dynasty. Buddhist monasteries and sects proliferated, and the Tang imperial court often patronized Buddhism in one form or another during its first two centuries of power. However, because so many aspects of Buddhism were at variance with the traditional culture of China, especially Confucian values, conflict was almost inevitable.

One of the leaders in the Confucian counterattack on Buddhism was the classical prose stylist and poet Han Yu (768–824), who in 819 composed a polemic against Buddhism. Presented as a memorandum, or *memorial*, to Emperor Tang Xianzong on the subject of the emperor's veneration of a relic of the Buddha's finger, Han Yu's elegant and witty essay so enraged the emperor that initially he wanted to execute the author. Eventually, the emperor contented himself with banishing his impudent civil servant to a frontier outpost. Our first document is that essay, the celebrated *Memorial on Buddhism*, which occasioned Han Yu's fall from imperial favor.

A champion of rationalism, Han Yu wished to suppress religious Daoism as well as Buddhism. Stimulated by the example of Buddhism and by the same political turmoil that had aided the rise in popularity of the Mahayana faith in China, Daoism had evolved during the early centuries C.E. into an organized religion that promised physical immortality through magic. Ironically, it was due to the influence of Daoist priests that Emperor Tang Wuzong initiated a policy of state suppression of a number of foreign religious establishments in 842, which culminated with his famous *Proclamation Ordering the Destruction of Buddhist Monasteries* of 845. The emperor died seven months after issuing the order, and with his death the full force of the edict was relaxed. However, substantial damage had already been done to the institutional structures of Buddhism, as well as Nestorian Christianity and other foreign faiths that had infiltrated China during the cosmopolitan reign of Early Tang.

Buddhist monasteries were especially hard hit by the state-ordered closures, and Chinese Buddhism consequently suffered a major reversal of fortune, so far as its possessions and political power were concerned. However, Buddhism remained strong at the popular level, especially a form of Mahayana devotion known as the *Pure Land Sect*, which centered on devotion to two deities: *Amitabha*, the Buddha of Infinite Light, who presided over the Western Paradise; and his chief assistant, the Bodhisattva Guanyin, who reigned as the goddess of mercy (Chap-

ter 6, sources 44 and 45). Moreover, Buddhism increasingly merged with folk magic, Daoism, and Confucianism to become part of a uniquely Chinese religious complex.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. How does Han Yu imply that emperors who have espoused Buddhism have lost the Mandate of Heaven?
2. Which aspect of Buddhism most repels Han Yu?
3. In Han Yu's mind, what are the social, cultural, and political dangers of Buddhism?
4. Exactly what does the imperial proclamation command, and what does it not say? For example: Does the proclamation suppress only Buddhist monasteries? Does it forbid people to believe in foreign religions? Does it order the persecution of any individuals?
5. On what ideological basis does it order the suppression of monasteries and temples? Is there any evidence to suggest that maybe there were also political and economic reasons for closing down and confiscating these establishments?
6. Is there any evidence to suggest that the person who drafted the imperial proclamation had read or been influenced by Han Yu's *Memorial*?

MEMORIAL ON BUDDHISM

Your servant submits that Buddhism is but one of the practices of barbarians which has filtered into China since the Later Han. In ancient times there was no such thing. . . . In those times the empire was at peace, and the people, contented and happy, lived out their full complement of years. . . . The Buddhist doctrine had still not reached China, so this could not have been the result of serving the Buddha.

The Buddhist doctrine first appeared in the time of the Emperor Ming¹ of the Han Dynasty, and the Emperor Ming was a scant eighteen years on the throne. Afterwards followed a succession of disorders and revolutions, when dynasties did not long endure. From the time of the dynasties Song, Qi, Liang, Chen, and Wei,² as they grew

more zealous in the service of the Buddha, the reigns of kings became shorter. There was only the Emperor Wu of the Liang who was on the throne for forty-eight years. First and last, he thrice abandoned the world and dedicated himself to the service of the Buddha. He refused to use animals in the sacrifices in his own ancestral temple. His single meal a day was limited to fruits and vegetables. In the end he was driven out and died of hunger. His dynasty likewise came to an untimely end. In serving the Buddha he was seeking good fortune, but the disaster that overtook him was only the greater. Viewed in the light of this, it is obvious that the Buddha is not worth serving.

When Gaozu³ first succeeded to the throne of the Sui,⁴ he planned to do away with Buddhism, but his ministers and advisors were short-sighted

¹Han Mingdi (r. 57–75).

²Five fairly short-lived dynasties of the troubled fourth through sixth centuries. (See Chapter 5, source 41 for additional information on the Northern Wei Dynasty's patronage of Buddhism.) The Wei, who were foreign conquerors, apparently used Buddhism's universal message as an ideological buttress for their rule.

³Literally "high (or great) ancestor," an honorific title bestowed posthumously on several Chinese emperors. This high ancestor was Li Yuan (r. 618–626), the first Tang emperor (see source 69, note 3).

men incapable of any real understanding of the Way of the Former Kings, or of what is fitting for past and present; they were unable to apply the Emperor's ideas so as to remedy this evil, and the matter subsequently came to naught — many the times your servant has regretted it. I venture to consider that Your Imperial Majesty, shrewd and wise in peace and war, with divine wisdom and heroic courage, is without an equal through the centuries. When first you came to the throne, you would not permit laymen to become monks or nuns or Daoist priests,⁵ nor would you allow the founding of temples or cloisters. It constantly struck me that the intention of Gaozu was to be fulfilled by Your Majesty. Now even though it has not been possible to put it into effect immediately, it is surely not right to remove all restrictions and turn around and actively encourage them.

Now I hear that by Your Majesty's command a troupe of monks went to Fengxiang⁶ to get the Buddha-bone, and that you viewed it from a tower as it was carried into the Imperial Palace; also that you have ordered that it be received and honored in all the temples in turn. Although your servant⁷ is stupid, he cannot help knowing that Your Majesty is not misled by this Buddha, and that you do not perform these devotions to pray for good luck. But just because the harvest has been good and the people are happy, you are complying with the general desire by putting on for the citizens of the capital this extraordinary spectacle which is nothing more than a sort of theatrical amusement. How could a sublime intelligence like yours consent to believe in this sort of thing?

But the people are stupid and ignorant; they are easily deceived and with difficulty enlightened. If they see Your Majesty behaving in this fashion, they are going to think you serve the

Buddha in all sincerity. All will say, "The Emperor is wisest of all, and yet he is a sincere believer. What are we common people that we still should grudge our lives?" Burning heads and searing fingers by the tens and hundreds, throwing away their clothes and scattering their money, from morning to night emulating one another and fearing only to be last, old and young rush about, abandoning their work and place; and if restrictions are not immediately imposed, they will increasingly make the rounds of temples and some will inevitably cut off their arms and slice their flesh in the way of offerings. Thus to violate decency and draw the ridicule of the whole world is no light matter.

Now the Buddha was of barbarian origin. His language differed from Chinese speech; his clothes were of a different cut; his mouth did not pronounce the prescribed words of the Former Kings,⁸ his body was not clad in the garments prescribed by the Former Kings. He did not recognize the relationship between prince and subject, nor the sentiments of father and son. Let us suppose him to be living today, and that he come to court at the capital as an emissary of his country. Your Majesty would receive him courteously. But only one interview in the audience chamber, one banquet in his honor, one gift of clothing, and he would be escorted under guard to the border that he might not mislead the masses.

How much the less, now that he has long been dead, is it fitting that his decayed and rotten bone, his ill-omened and filthy remains, should be allowed to enter in the forbidden precincts of the Palace? Confucius said, "Respect ghosts and spirits, but keep away from them."⁹ The feudal lords of ancient times, when they went to pay a visit of condolence in their states, made it their practice to have exorcists go before with

⁴The Sui Dynasty (581–618) reunited China in 589.

⁵By the second century C.E., a polytheistic Daoist Church, which practiced congregational worship, preached physical immortality, and used drugs and magic to achieve that immortality, had emerged as a significant force.

⁶A western city.

⁷Han Yu.

⁸The legendary predynastic Sage Emperors (see the section in Chapter 1 entitled "China: The Land of the Yellow River," and Chapter 4, source 26).

⁹From *The Analects*. (See Chapter 4, source 24, for similar Confucian aphorisms.)

rush-brooms and peachwood branches to dispel unlucky influences. Only after such precautions did they make their visit of condolence. Now without reason you have taken up an unclean thing and examined it in person when no exorcist had gone before, when neither rush-broom nor peachwood branch had been employed. But your ministers did not speak of the wrong nor did the censors call attention to the impropriety; I am in truth ashamed of them. I pray that Your Majesty will turn this bone over to the officials that it may be cast into water or fire, cutting off for all time the root and so dispelling the suspicions of the empire and preventing the befuddlement of later generations. Thereby men may know in what manner a great sage acts who a million times surpasses ordinary men. Could this be anything but ground for prosperity? Could it be anything but a cause for rejoicing?

If the Buddha has supernatural power and can wreak harm and evil, may any blame or retribution fittingly fall on my person. Heaven be my witness: I will not regret it. Unbearably disturbed and with the utmost sincerity I respectfully present my petition that these things may be known.

Your servant is truly alarmed, truly afraid.

PROCLAMATION ORDERING THE DESTRUCTION OF THE BUDDHIST MONASTERIES

We learn that there was no such thing as Buddhism prior to the Three Dynasties, i.e., Xia, Yin, and Zhou.¹⁰ After the dynasties of Han and Wei, the Image-Teaching¹¹ gradually began to flourish. And once established in that degenerate age, this strange custom prevailed far and wide, and now the people are soaked to the bone with it. Just now the national spirit begins to be spoiled unconsciously by it; and, leading the

heart of the people astray, it has put the public in worse condition than ever. In the country — throughout the nine provinces, and among the mountains and fields as well as in both the capitals — the number of priests is daily increasing and the Buddhist temples are constantly winning support.

Wasting human labor in building, plundering the people's purse by golden decorations, neglecting both husband and wife by their vigil-keeping, no teaching is more harmful than this Buddhism. In breaking the laws of the country and injuring the people, none can surpass this Buddhism. Moreover, if a farmer neglects his field, many suffer the pangs of starvation from his negligence; if a woman neglects her silk-worm culture, many suffer the calamity of being frozen to death through her negligence. Now there are at present so many monks and nuns that to count them is almost impossible. They all depend on farming for their food, and upon silk-worms for their clothing!

"The public monasteries and temples, as well as private chapels and shrines, are innumerable; and all of them so gigantic and imposing that they vie with the Imperial Palace in splendor! In Dynasties Jin (317–420 C.E.) and Song (420–476 C.E.), Qi (479–501 C.E.), and Liang (502–557 C.E.), the resources of this Empire were exhausted and the country gradually declined, while its manners and customs became flippant and insincere, solely because of this Buddhism.

"Our Imperial ancestor Taizong¹² put an end to confusion and disorder by his arms, and built up the glorious Middle Kingdom and governed his people by his accomplished learning and culture. The right of 'the pen' (i.e., peaceful rule or civic administration) and 'the sword' (i.e., war) belongs to the State, and they are the two weapons wherewith to govern the Empire. How dare the insignificant Teaching of the Western Lands compete with ours? During the periods of

¹⁰China's first three dynasties (see the section in Chapter 1 entitled "China: The Land of the Yellow River"). *Yin* is another name for the late Shang Dynasty.

¹¹Buddhism, which used statues and paintings of Buddhas

and Bodhisattvas for veneration and instruction (see Chapter 5, source 41, and Chapter 6, source 45).

¹²See source 69.

Zhenguan and Gaiyuan,¹³ things were bettered once for all, but the remnants were smouldering, and poverty began to grow bigger and wider and threatened to set the country ablaze!

"After closely examining the examples set by our Imperial predecessors, We have finally decided to put an end to such conspicuous evils. Do you, Our subjects at home and abroad, obey and conform to Our sincere will. If you send in a Memorial suggesting how to exterminate these evils which have beset Us for many Dynasties, We shall do all We can to carry out the plan. Know that We yield to none in fulfilling the laws of Our predecessors and in trying to be helpful to Our people and beneficial to the public.

"Those 4,600 monasteries supported by the Government shall be confiscated and, at the same time, 260,500 nuns and priests shall return to the secular life so that they may be able to pay the taxes. We shall also confiscate 40,000 private temples with the fertile and good lands

amounting to several tens of millions of acres; and emancipate 150,000 slaves and make them into free, tax-paying people. Examining into the teaching from the foreign lands in the Empire, We have discovered that there are over 3,000 monks from Daqin¹⁴ and Muhufu;¹⁵ and these monks also shall return to the lay life. They shall not mingle and interfere with the manners and customs of the Middle Kingdom.

"More than a hundred thousand idle, lazy people and busy bodies have been driven away, and numberless beautifully decorated useless temples have been completely swept away. Hereafter, purity of life shall rule Our people and simple and non-assertive rules prevail, and the people of all quarters shall bask in the sunshine of Our Imperial Influence. But this is only the beginning of the reforms. Let time be given for all, and let Our will be made known to every one of Our subjects lest the people misunderstand Our wish."

¹³The official names of the reigns of Emperor Tang Taizong (r. 626–649) and Emperor Tang Xuanzong (r. 712–756), the dynasty's two greatest rulers.

¹⁴From Syria. A reference to Nestorian Christianity (see source 69).

¹⁵A reference to Zoroastrians from Persia.

The Neo-Confucian Response to Buddhism



74 ▼ *Zhu Xi, CONVERSATIONS OF MASTER ZHU, ARRANGED TOPICALLY*

Buddhist beliefs and values were too deeply imbedded in Chinese society to be rooted out by governmental pressure, but a school of moral philosophy later known as *Neo-Confucianism* fashioned a cosmology that offered Chinese intellectuals a metaphysical alternative to Buddhist transcendentalism. Whereas traditional Confucian philosophers had focused on practical ethical behavior in the observable world and had largely refused to speculate on such issues as humanity's relationship with the cosmos and the spiritual world, Buddhist thinkers had traditionally begun their quests for Enlightenment with such basic questions. The deep intellectual attraction of Buddhist metaphysics, which offered a way of perceiving the universe and humanity's place within it that ran counter to traditional Chinese thought, was met and countered by China's Neo-Confucians.

During the eleventh and twelfth centuries, partially due to Buddhist and Daoist influences and partially in reaction to these two ways of thought, certain Confucian

philosophers formulated a Confucian metaphysics that placed humanity squarely into a full spiritual and cosmological context. At the same time, these thinkers rejected all notions of human immortality and salvation. Rather than postulating an unworldly but natural cosmic Way that is undefinable, as the Daoists did, or an otherworldly Reality that totally transcends an illusory physical world, as the Buddhists did, the Neo-Confucians asserted that there is an infinite Principle (*li*) that pervades and energizes the universe and everything and everyone within it, but that Principle is knowable and intimately connected to physical reality. Whereas contemporary Daoists offered the promise of physical immortality through their mastery of the arcane ways of the Dao and Buddhists offered the promise of spiritual salvation through Enlightenment, Neo-Confucians offered the promise of a world made better through the social and political actions of those who apprehend and cultivate the moral Principle that underlies the universe. Although that Principle is knowable through countless means, because it inheres in all people, things, and affairs, it is most clearly and easily apprehended through study of certain Confucian Classics. In brief, whereas Daoists in the Song Era hoped to escape the normal human cycle of birth and death through magic and Buddhists hoped to break out of that cycle through meditation and prayer, Neo-Confucians emphasized and celebrated the cycle of human existence and looked to perfect it through study aimed at activism.

The greatest and most influential of the Neo-Confucians was *Zhu Xi* (1130–1200), who created a body of thought that became the basis of the entire educational system of China in the fourteenth century and remained so down to the early twentieth century. For over six centuries China's civil service examinations centered on Neo-Confucian ideas and traditions. This philosophy, especially as articulated by Zhu Xi, traveled to Korea and also found a home in Japan. Early in the seventeenth century, Ieyasu, first Tokugawa shogun of Japan, adopted and patronized Neo-Confucianism as an ideology to buttress his reorganization of Japanese society.

Long before Zhu Xi's teachings were canonized into official state orthodoxies in China and Japan, his students wrote down and collected their master's conversations. In 1270 Li Jing-de compiled and published the *Conversations of Master Zhu, Arranged Topically*, which he based on several earlier collections of conversations that had taken place between 1170 and 1200. In the following selection we have a sampling of Master Zhu's statements regarding how one is to read and use books. Li Jing-de, as you will note, was not troubled by redundancies among the aphorisms that he collected and arranged by topic.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. If moral Principle (*li*) is found in every person, why must people study in order to find it?
2. What type of study and how much of it does Zhu Xi recommend? Why? Be detailed in your answer.

3. Review Confucius' *Analects* (Chapter 4, source 24). Given that *neo* means "new," what was so new about Neo-Confucianism? What, if anything, was traditional about this philosophy?
4. Whereas many Buddhists, especially Chan Buddhists (source 75), hoped to reach Enlightenment through meditation, Neo-Confucians sought the moral Principle through study. Notwithstanding that difference, do you find anything in Zhu Xi's educational theory that might suggest Buddhist influence?

4.2. Book learning is of secondary importance. It would seem that moral principle is originally complete in man; the reason he must engage in book learning is that he hasn't experienced much. The sages experienced a great deal and wrote it down for others to read. Now in book learning we must simply apprehend the many manifestations of moral principle. Once we understand them, we'll find that all of them were complete in us from the very beginning, not added to us from the outside.

4.3. Learning is to focus on what is of vital importance to our selves (i.e., moral principle) — book learning itself is of secondary importance. Moral principle is complete in us, not something added from the outside. Thus when sages tell people that they must engage in book learning, it's because even though they might possess moral principle they must experience it if it is to have any effect. What the sages speak about is what they have experienced of it.

4.4. In teaching others, the sages and worthies explained the way of learning quite clearly. Generally speaking, in their reading students should probe to the limit. "The pursuit of learning" is an important matter, for one has to understand moral principle to become fully human. Ordinarily, in reading a book we must read and re-read it, appreciating each and every paragraph, each and every sentence, each and every word. Furthermore, we must consult the various annotations, commentaries, and explanations so that our understanding is complete. In this way moral principle and our own minds will be in

perfect accord. Only then will our reading be effective. . . .

4.5. Read books to observe the intentions of the sages and worthies. Follow the intentions of the sages and worthies to observe natural principle.

4.6. It's best to take up the books of the sages and read them so that you understand their ideas. It's like speaking with them face to face.

4.7. You must frequently take the words of the sages and worthies and pass them before your eyes, roll them around and around in your mouth, and turn them over and over in your mind.

4.8. When you begin reading, you become aware that you're unlike the sages and worthies — how can you not urge yourself on?

4.9. There is layer upon layer [of meaning] in the words of the sages. In your reading of them, penetrate deeply. If you simply read what appears on the surface, you will misunderstand. Steep yourself in the words; only then will you grasp their meaning.

4.10. When men read a text, they merely read one layer; they don't try to get at the second layer.

4.11. In reading, you must look for an opening in the text, only then will you find the moral principle in it. If you do not see an opening, you'll have no way to enter into the text. Once you find an opening, the coherence of the text will naturally become clear. . . .

4.13. In reading a text, you must be full of vigor. Arouse your spirits, keep your body alert, and don't let yourself grow weary — as if a sword were at your back. You must pierce through each

passage. "Strike the head, the tail responds; strike the tail, the head responds."¹ Only then have you read it right. You cannot open a book and fix your mind on it then close it and forget about it. Nor can you when reading the commentary forget about the text or when reading the text forget about the commentary. You must pierce through one passage and only then go on to later ones. . . .

4.16. In reading, to understand moral principle the mind must be open, unobstructed, and bright. You mustn't be calculating beforehand the gain² you'll get from the reading. For once you think about gain, you'll become distressed. And if you're distressed, trivial things will gather in the mind and won't leave. Now you should put aside unimportant matters, stop engaging in idle thought, and concentrate the mind in order to get a real sense of moral principle. In this way the mind will become sharp, and once the mind's sharp, it'll become intimately familiar with moral principle.

4.17. In reading, open wide the mind and moral principle will appear. If the mind is anxious and under pressure, moral principle ultimately will have no way of appearing.

4.18. Your reading will be successful only if you understand the spot where everything interconnects — east and west meet at this pivotal point. Simply dedicate yourself to what you're doing at the moment, don't think about the past or the future, and you'll naturally get to this point. But now you say that you've never been able to do it (i.e., read properly), that you fear you're too slow, or fear that you're not up to doing it, or fear that it is difficult, or fear that you're stupid, or fear that you won't remember what you've read — all this is idle talk. Simply dedicate yourself to what you're doing at the moment, don't be concerned whether you're slow or fast, and soon you will naturally get there. Because you have never done it before, exert the

right effort now, and make up for past failures. Don't look to your front or back, don't think about east or west, or soon you'll have wasted a lifetime without realizing that you've grown old. . . .

4.20. Read little but become intimately familiar with what you read; experience the text over and over again; and do not think about gain. Keep constantly to these three matters and nothing more.

4.21. Generally, in reading, students should keep to these three [dicta]: (1) read little but become intimately familiar with what you read; (2) don't scrutinize the text, developing your own farfetched views of it, but rather personally experience it over and over again; and (3) concentrate fully, without thought of gain.

4.22. Best to read less but to become intimately familiar with what you read. That children remember what they've read and adults frequently don't is simply because children's minds are focused. If in one day they are given one hundred characters, they keep to one hundred characters; if given two hundred characters, they keep to two hundred characters. Adults sometimes read one hundred pages of characters in one day — they aren't so well focused. Often they read ten separate pieces when it would be best to read one part in ten. Extend the time you give to your reading; limit the size of your curriculum. . . .

4.29. Reading is one way of apprehending the principle in things. Now we must carefully consider each and every paragraph, over and over again. If in one day or two days we read just one paragraph, this paragraph will become part of us. After gaining a solid understanding of this paragraph, we should read the next one. If we go on like this from paragraph to paragraph, after a while we will understand moral principle in its entirety. What's required here is that we never stop thinking, occasionally turning over and over

¹By reading one part intensively, the other part will make sense.

²A pun. Just as Confucius juxtaposed *propriety* and *gain*, both

of whose characters are pronounced "li" (Chapter 3, source 24, note 4), so Zhu Xi juxtaposes the moral Principle (*li*) and gain.

in our minds what's already become clear to us; then, enlightenment may occur, without our specially arranging for it. For though the writing and the meaning of a text may have been explained in a certain way, each reading of it will produce its own understanding; thus, with some texts, each reading will lead to a revised understanding. As for those works that have already

been definitively explained, with each reading our understanding will become still sounder, and much clearer. Hence I have said: "In reading, don't value quantity, value only your familiarity with what you've read." In our efforts to understand what we read, therefore, it's best to advance boldly and not think about retreating.

Zen Buddhism in Japan



75 ▼ *Dogen, ON LIFE AND DEATH*

Pure Land Buddhism's mass popularity survived Late Tang's assault on the Teaching of the Western Lands, just as *Chan* (meditation) Buddhism remained popular with the educated elite. Chan was introduced into China from India in the early sixth century. There it fused with Daoism to become a thoroughly Sinicized Buddhist sect by the late seventh century. For Chan practitioners, meditation was not an avenue to insight; it *was* insight. Disdaining all learning and logic, Chan masters sought to lead their students to a state in which they suspended all normal forms of reasoning and intuitively grasped the Buddha nature that lies within each person and thing. This Enlightenment, or Awakening, would be a blinding and unexpected flash that could be triggered by any nonrational activity or external stimulus: contemplating a rock or the jolt of a clap of thunder. To prepare their students for this moment of Awakening, Chan masters presented them with puzzles for meditation that had no logical answers. One of the classic conundrums Chan students wrestled with was "What is the sound of one hand clapping?"

Because Chan monks mostly remained aloof from imperial patronage in the early Tang Era, their sect suffered far less than others in the persecutions of the mid ninth century. In the following era of the Song Dynasty, Chan continued to exhibit great intellectual and artistic vitality, and it thus deeply influenced Song art, literature, and philosophy. During the age of Song, Chan Buddhism also took root in Japan due to the efforts of two Japanese masters who had studied in China: *Eisei* (1141–1215) and *Dogen* (1200–1253). Characteristically, the Japanese converted this import, which they pronounced *Zen*, into something distinctly Japanese.

Zen's austerity and discipline, as well as its emphasis on intuitive action as opposed to logical thought, appealed to Japan's feudal warrior class, the emerging *samurai*. Many fused Zen philosophy to their military skills, attempting to break down the artificial and logical duality between warrior and weapon. For example, a form of archery in which the archer sought to become one with the bow and arrow became part of Zen training. The archer did not consciously aim; instead, the arrow projected itself from the bow into the target. In a similar manner, Zen profoundly influenced all other forms of Japanese culture, especially its

sense of beauty and proper ceremony. The tea ceremony becomes a moment of Zen meditation and potential Awakening, as one intuitively how a common herb and a lump of clay are things of comfort and serene beauty. The Buddha-reality of a refreshing beverage and the delicately fashioned cup that holds it is revealed to the person open to receiving the insight.

One of the pioneers of the tea ceremony was Dogen, who, on a visit to China in 1222, brought with him a potter to study the art of Chinese porcelain. The potter later established a thriving center for the production of tea vessel ceramics in Japan. In the following sermon, Dogen talks not about tea but about life and death, important issues to a Zen master, but no more so than the proper preparation and drinking of tea. Here Dogen addresses the issue of how both life and death are equally expressions of Buddha-reality.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. What does Dogen mean when he states that one should neither renounce nor covet life and death?
2. What does he mean when he states that life and death must be regarded as identical to Nirvana?
3. Is Buddhahood something to be attained in another life? Is it even something to be achieved? What do your answers mean?
4. Reread Laozi in Chapter 4, source 23. Can you find any Daoist elements in Dogen's thought?
5. Why would the Zen approach to life and death be especially attractive to a warrior? Can you see any germs of a code of warrior conduct in this philosophy?

"Since there is Buddhahood in both life and death," says Kassan, "neither exists." Jozan says, "Since there is no Buddhahood in life or death, one is not led astray by either." So go the sayings of the enlightened masters, and he who wishes to free himself of the life-and-death bondage must grasp their seemingly contradictory sense.

To seek Buddhahood outside of life and death is to ride north to reach Southern Etsu or face south to glimpse the North Star. Not only are you traveling the wrong way on the road to emancipation, you are increasing the links in your karma-chain. To find release you must begin to regard life and death as identical to Nirvana, neither loathing the former nor coveting the latter.

It is fallacious to think that you simply move from birth to death. Birth, from the Buddhist point of view, is a temporary point between the preceding and the succeeding; hence it can be called birthlessness. The same holds for death and deathlessness. In life there is nothing more than life, in death nothing more than death: we are being born and are dying at every moment.

Now, to conduct: in life identify yourself with life, at death with death. Abstain from yielding and craving. Life and death constitute the very being of Buddha. Thus, should you renounce life and death, you will lose; and you can expect no more if you cling to either. You must neither loathe, then, nor covet, neither think nor speak of these things. Forgetting body and mind, by placing them together in Buddha's hands and

letting him lead you on, you will without design or effort gain freedom, attain Buddhahood.

There is an easy road to Buddhahood: avoid evil, do nothing about life-and-death, be merci-

ful to all sentient things, respect superiors and sympathize with inferiors, have neither likes nor dislikes, and dismiss idle thoughts and worries. Only then will you become a Buddha.

Southwest Asia: Crossroads of the Afro-Eurasian World

Of all the significant developments that took place in Southwest Asia during the thousand-year period from 500 to 1500, the two most far-reaching were the rise and spread of Islam and the arrival of Turkish, European, and Mongol invaders after the year 1000. By approximately 750 Islam was firmly in control of most of Southwest Asia, except for the Anatolian Peninsula, which remained the heart of the East Roman, or *Byzantine*, Empire until late in the eleventh century, when Islamic Turkish forces began the process of transforming this land into Turkey. Seljuk and Ottoman Turks, European crusaders, Mongols, and the armies of Timur the Lame would invade and contest Southwest Asia for much of the period from 1000 to 1500.

Around the early sixteenth century a clear pattern emerged. Most of Europe's Christian crusaders had been expelled from the eastern Mediterranean, except for their precarious possession of a handful of island strongholds, such as Cyprus and Crete; the Mongol empire was only a fading memory; and Timur the Lame's empire had crumbled upon his death in 1405. Two Turkish Islamic empires dominated Southwest Asia — the Shi'ite Safavids of Persia and the Sunni Ottomans, whose base of power was Anatolia, but who also controlled Syria-Palestine, Egypt, and western Arabia and were driving deeply into Europe's Balkan Peninsula. Although these two empires would quarrel viciously for control of Islam, and Sunnis and Shi'ites would continue to shed one another's blood, Turkish domination of Southwest Asia was secure for the foreseeable future. European attempts to counter the Turkish menace by launching new crusades in the eastern Mediterranean generally proved feeble, and the Ottomans' and Safavids' pastoral cousins on the steppes of Inner Asia were becoming less of a threat to the stability of Eurasia's civilizations.

The Arrival of the Turks



76 ▼ *Al-Jahiz, THE MERITS OF THE TURKS AND OF THE IMPERIAL ARMY AS A WHOLE*

Early in the ninth century the caliphs of Baghdad addressed the problem of creating a loyal army by enlisting foreign slaves and mercenaries, many of whom came from various tribes of Turkic-speaking, pastoral peoples across the frontier in the steppes of Inner Asia. As aliens, the Turks had no ties to the various factions that threatened the caliph's power. To the contrary, they were initially dependent upon the caliph, their lord and paymaster. In a short time, however, these Turkish warriors converted to Islam and became powers behind the throne. As early as the mid ninth century some Turkish officers were playing important roles in the selection of caliphs. From that point on the caliphs and their ministers became increasingly dependent on various Turkish elements in the army, and it was almost an anticlimax when Tughril-Beg, leader of a tribe of Turks known as the *Seljuks*, entered Baghdad on December 19, 1055, to be recognized formally as *sultan* (governor) and to have his name mentioned in Friday prayers after that of the caliph. Civil and military authority now lay in the hands of Turkish sultans, and the caliph retained only religious and ceremonial functions. Under the Seljuks, Islam quickly expanded into Byzantine Anatolia, thereby precipitating a Western Christian response — the crusades.

Two centuries earlier, a resident of the port city of Basra in southern Iraq, Abu Uthman Amr ibn Bahr (776–869) — better known by his nickname *al-Jahiz* (the Goggle-Eyed) — composed a study of the Turks, in which he attempted to place these recent converts to Islam in a favorable light. Many cultivated Arabs and Persians despised the Turks, whom they considered to be barbarians, and resented their growing power. Al-Jahiz, one of the most popular and gifted essayists of his day and always a voice of reason and moderation, attempted to counter those attitudes. A person of largely African lineage, al-Jahiz was possibly influenced to take this public stand by the prejudice he had apparently suffered because of his dark skin.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. What does al-Jahiz's essay tell us about the equestrian and military qualities of the Turks and, by extension, of other pastoral peoples from Central Asia? Does this portrait help explain the role played in Eurasian history by the horse nomads?
2. How, according to the essayist, do the Turks resemble the Arabs of the Prophet's day?
3. Given these qualities, what special value do the Turks offer Islamic society?
4. Does al-Jahiz seem to believe that the Turks are capable of being civilized and becoming more than just warriors? If so, what? On what do you base your answer?

5. How, if at all, does this essay reveal the cosmopolitan perspective of ninth-century Iraq?

THE TURK AS A HORSEMAN

A Kharijite¹ at close quarters relies entirely on his lance. But the Turks are as good as the Kharijites with the lance, and in addition, if a thousand of their horsemen are hard-pressed they will loose all their arrows in a single volley and bring down a thousand enemy horsemen. No body of men can stand up against such a test.

Neither the Kharijites nor the Bedouins² are famous for their prowess as mounted bowmen. But the Turk will hit from his saddle an animal, a bird, a target, a man, a couching animal, a marker post or a bird of prey stooping on its quarry. His horse may be exhausted from being galloped and reined in, wheeled to right and left, and mounted and dismounted; but he himself goes on shooting, loosing ten arrows before the Kharijite has let fly one. He gallops his horse up a hillside or down a gully faster than the Kharijite can make his go on the flat.

The Turk has two pairs of eyes, one at the front and the other at the back of his head. . . .

They train their horsemen to carry two or even three bows, and spare bowstrings in proportion. Thus in the hour of battle the Turk has on him everything needful for himself, his weapon and the care of his steed. As for their ability to stand trotting, sustained galloping, long night rides and cross-country journeys, it is truly extraordinary. In the first place the Kharijite's horse has not the staying-power of the Turk's pony; and the Kharijite has no more than a horseman's knowledge of how to look after his mount. The

Turk, however, is more experienced than a professional farrier,³ and better than a trainer at getting what he wants from his pony. For it was he who brought it into the world and reared it from a foal; it comes when he calls it, and follows behind him when he runs. . . .

If the Turk's daily life were to be reckoned up in detail, he would be found to spend more time in the saddle than on the ground.

The Turk sometimes rides a stallion, sometimes a brood mare. Whether he is going to war, on a journey, out hunting or on any other errand, the brood mare follows behind with her foals. If he gets tired of hunting the enemy he hunts waterfowl. If he gets hungry, jogging up and down in the saddle, he has only to lay hands on one of his animals. If he gets thirsty, he milks one of his brood mares. If he needs to rest his mount, he vaults on to another without so much as putting his feet to the ground.

Of all living creatures he is the only one whose body can adapt itself to eating nothing but meat. As for his steed, leaves and shoots are all it needs; he gives it no shelter from the sun and no covering against the cold.

As regards ability to stand trotting, if the stamina of the border fighters, the posthorse outriders,⁴ the Kharijites and the eunuchs⁵ were all combined in one man, they would not equal a Turk.

The Turk demands so much of his mount that only the toughest of his horses is equal to the task; even one that he had ridden to exhaustion, so as to be useless for his expeditions, would outdo a Kharijite's horse in staying

¹One of the earliest sects to break off from the main body of Islam, the Kharijites were noted as fierce warriors.

²Arab nomads of Arabia, North Africa, and the eastern Mediterranean.

³A blacksmith.

⁴Mounted attendants who rode alongside a carriage and, as needed, exchanged horses at post stations along the route.

⁵Castrated slaves who performed domestic services. According to ninth-century Arabic folklore, eunuchs endured long horse rides especially well — possibly as a consequence of their mutilation.

power, and no Tukhari pony could compare with it.

The Turk is at one and the same time herdsman, groom, trainer, horse-dealer, farrier and rider: in short, a one-man team.

When the Turk travels with horsemen of other races, he covers twenty miles to their ten, leaving them and circling around to right and left, up on to the high ground and down to the bottom of the gullies, and shooting all the while at anything that runs, crawls, flies or stands still. The Turk never travels like the rest of the band, and never rides straight ahead. On a long, hard ride, when it is noon and the halting-place is still afar off, all are silent, oppressed with fatigue and overwhelmed into weariness. Their misery leaves no room for conversation. Everything round them crackles in the intense heat, or perhaps is frozen hard. As the journey drags on, even the toughest and most resolute begin to wish that the ground would open under their feet. At the sight of a mirage or a marker post on a ridge they are transported with joy, supposing it to be the halting-place. When at last they reach it, the horsemen all drop from the saddle and stagger about bandy-legged like children who have been given an enema, groaning like sick men, yawning to refresh themselves and stretching luxuriously to overcome their stiffness. But your Turk, though he has covered twice the distance and dislocated his shoulders with shooting, has only to catch sight of a gazelle or an onager⁶ near the halting-place, or put up a fox or a hare, and he is off again at a gallop as though he had only just mounted. It might have been someone else who had done that long ride and endured all that weariness.

At the gully the band bunches together at the bridge or the best crossing-place; but the Turk, digging his heels into his pony, is already going up the other side like a shooting star. If there is a steep rise, he leaves the track and scrambles straight up the hillside, going where even the ibex⁷ cannot go. To see him scaling such slopes

anyone would think he was recklessly risking his life: but if that were so he would not last long, for he is always doing it. . . .

NATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Know that every nation, people, generation or tribe that shows itself outstanding in craftsmanship or pre-eminent in eloquence, the various branches of learning, the establishment of empires or the art of war, only attains the peak of perfection because God has steered it in that direction and given it the means and the special aptitudes appropriate to those activities. Peoples of varying habits of thought, different opinions and dissimilar characters cannot attain perfection unless they fulfill the conditions needed to carry on an activity, and have a natural aptitude for it. Good examples are the Chinese in craftsmanship, the Greeks in philosophy and literature, the Arabs in fields that we mean to deal with in their proper place . . . and the Turks in the art of war. . . .

The Chinese for their part are specialists in smelting, casting and metalworking, in fine colors, in sculpture, weaving and drawing; they are very skillful with their hands, whatever the medium, the technique or the cost of the materials. The Greeks are theoreticians rather than practitioners, while the Chinese are practitioners rather than theoreticians; the former are thinkers, the latter doers.

The Arabs, again, were not merchants, artisans, physicians, farmers — for that would have degraded them —, mathematicians or fruit-farmers — for they wished to escape the humiliation of the tax; nor were they out to earn or amass money, hoard possessions or lay hands on other people's; they were not of those who make their living with a pair of scales; . . . they were not poor enough to be indifferent to learning, pursued neither wealth, that breeds foolishness, nor good fortune, that begets apathy, and never tolerated humiliation, which was dishonor and

⁶A speedy wild ass of Central Asia.

⁷An Asiatic mountain goat.

death to their souls. They dwelt in the plains, and grew up in contemplation of the desert. They knew neither damp nor rising mist, neither fog nor foul air, nor a horizon bounded by walls. When these keen minds and clear brains turned to poetry, fine language, eloquence and oratory, to physiognomy and astrology, genealogy, navigation by the stars and by marks on the ground, . . . to horse-breeding, weaponry and engines of war, to memorizing all that they heard, pondering on everything that caught their attention and discriminating between the glories and the shames of their tribes, they achieved perfection beyond the wildest dreams. Certain of these activities broadened their minds and exalted their aspirations, so that of all nations they are now the most glorious and the most given to recalling their past splendors.

It is the same with the Turks who dwell in tents in the desert and keep herds: they are the Bedouins of the non-Arabs. . . . Uninterested in craftsmanship or commerce, medicine, geometry, fruit-farming, building, digging canals or collecting taxes, they care only about raiding, hunting, horsemanship, skirmishing with rival chieftains, taking booty and invading other countries. Their efforts are all directed towards these activities, and they devote all their energies to these occupations. In this way they have acquired a mastery of these skills, which for them take the place of craftsmanship and commerce and constitute their only pleasure, their glory and the subject of all their conversation. Thus have they become in the realm of warfare what the Greeks are in philosophy, the Chinese in craftsmanship, and the Arabs in the fields we have enumerated.

The Arrival of the Franks



77 ▼ *Usamah ibn Munqidh*, *THE BOOK OF REFLECTIONS*

In 1095 Pope Urban II (r. 1088–1099) set in motion a movement that became known as the *crusades* — close to five hundred years of Western Christian involvement in the lands of the *Levant*, or eastern Mediterranean (Chapter 10, sources 90–92). From the Western Christian perspective, the crusades were an idealistic attempt to defend Christendom by combating the Islamic enemies of God who had captured and desecrated the Holy Land and threatened the well-being of Eastern Christians. From an eastern Mediterranean perspective, however, the crusades were barbarian invasions. Princess Anna Comnena, who composed a history of the reign of her father, Emperor Alexius I of Constantinople (r. 1081–1118), witnessed the armies of the First Crusade (1096–1101), which marched across Byzantine imperial lands on their way to fight Muslims and liberate Jerusalem, and wrote about them in detail. Although she shared their Christian faith, Princess Anna characterized the crusaders as unstable, greedy for money, and always ready to break their word. If a pious Eastern Christian thought this of her Western coreligionists, imagine what the Muslims thought.

One of the most telling commentaries on crusader behavior in Syria-Palestine comes from the memoirs of Usamah ibn Munqidh (1095–1188), an Arab warrior and gentleman of Syria. Usamah was four years of age when the armies of the First Crusade captured Jerusalem in a blood bath in 1099. He lived long enough,

however, to see Jerusalem reconquered in 1187 by his friend and patron Salah al-Din ibn Ayyub (known in the West as *Saladin*), the sultan of Egypt and Syria. Late in life, sometime past his ninetieth birthday, Usamah undertook the narration of his memoirs. His descriptions of the *Franks* (as all Westerners were called in the Levant), collectively constitute only a small portion of this amiably rambling work. They are, however, some of the autobiography's most fascinating and insightful sections.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. What does Usamah identify as the major deficiencies of the Franks?
2. Does he acknowledge any virtues or positive qualities on their part? If so, what?
3. *Acculturation* is the process of one ethnic group's adopting the cultural traits of another. Can you find any evidence of this phenomenon in Usamah's account?
4. Can you discover any evidence of friendly, or at least peaceful, relations between the crusaders and the Muslims of Syria-Palestine? To what do you ascribe such relations?
5. What is the general tone and overall message of Usamah's commentary on the Franks?

AN APPRECIATION OF THE FRANKISH CHARACTER

Their Lack of Sense

Mysterious are the works of the Creator, the author of all things! When one comes to recount cases regarding the Franks, he cannot but glorify Allah (exalted is he!) and sanctify him, for he sees them as animals possessing the virtues of courage and fighting, but nothing else; just as animals have only the virtues of strength and carrying loads. I shall now give some instances of their doings and their curious mentality.

In the army of King Fulk,¹ son of Fulk, was a Frankish reverend knight who had just arrived from their land in order to make the holy pilgrimage² and then return home. He was of my intimate fellowship and kept such constant company with me that he began to call me "my

brother." Between us were mutual bonds of amity and friendship. When he resolved to return by sea to his homeland, he said to me:

My brother, I am leaving for my country and I want you to send with me your son (my son, who was then fourteen years old, was at that time in my company) to our country, where he can see the knights and learn wisdom and chivalry. When he returns, he will be like a wise man.

Thus there fell upon my ears words which would never come out of the head of a sensible man; for even if my son were to be taken captive, his captivity could not bring him a worse misfortune than carrying him into the lands of the Franks. However, I said to the man:

By your life, this has exactly been my idea. But the only thing that prevented me from

¹Fulk, count of Anjou and king of Jerusalem (r. 1131–1143).

²To the Holy Land. A *pilgrimage* is a religious journey (often for penitential purposes) to a sacred site.

carrying it out was the fact that his grandmother, my mother, is so fond of him and did not this time let him come out with me until she exacted an oath from me to the effect that I would return him to her.

Thereupon he asked, "Is your mother still alive?" "Yes," I replied. "Well," said he, "disobey her not." . . .

Newly Arrived Franks Are Especially Rough: One Insists That Usamah Should Pray Eastward

Everyone who is a fresh emigrant from the Frankish lands is ruder in character than those who have become acclimatized and have held long association with the Muslims. Here is an illustration of their rude character.

Whenever I visited Jerusalem I always entered the Aqsa Mosque,³ beside which stood a small mosque which the Franks had converted into a church. When I used to enter the Aqsa Mosque, which was occupied by the Templars, who were my friends, the Templars would evacuate the little adjoining mosque so that I might pray in it. One day⁴ I entered this mosque, repeated the first formula, "Allah is great," and stood up in the act of praying, upon which one of the Franks rushed on me, got hold of me and turned my face eastward saying, "This is the way you should pray!" A group of Templars hastened to him, seized him, and repelled him from me. I resumed my prayer. The same man, while the others were otherwise busy, rushed once more on me and

turned my face eastward, saying, "This is the way you should pray!" The Templars again came in to him and expelled him. They apologized to me, saying, "This is a stranger who has only recently arrived from the land of the Franks and he has never before seen anyone praying except eastward." Thereupon I said to myself, "I have had enough prayer." So I went out and have ever been surprised at the conduct of this devil of a man, at the change in the color of his face, his trembling and his sentiment at the sight of one praying towards the *qiblah*.⁵

Another Wants to Show to a Muslim God as a Child

I saw one of the Franks come to al-Amir⁶ Mu'in-al-Din (may Allah's mercy rest upon his soul!) when he was in the Dome of the Rock⁷ and say to him, "Do you want to see God as a child?" Mu'in-al-Din said, "Yes." The Frank walked ahead of us until he showed us the picture of Mary with Christ (may peace be upon him!) as an infant in her lap. He then said, "This is God as a child." But Allah is exalted far above what the infidels say about him! . . .

Their Judicial Trials: A Duel

I attended one day a duel in Nablus between two Franks. The reason for this was that certain Muslim thieves took by surprise one of the villages of Nablus. One of the peasants of that village was charged with having acted as guide for the thieves when they fell upon the village. So he fled away. The king sent and arrested his children.

³The mosque of al-Aqsa, the site of Muhammad's Ascent to Heaven (Chapter 8, source 58, note 1) is located on the Temple Mount, the site where the ancient Jewish temples of Solomon and Herod the Great had been located. Following the crusader capture of Jerusalem, the mosque had been converted into a palace of the Latin king of Jerusalem. Subsequently, King Baldwin II (r. 1118–1131) handed over a portion of this mosque-palace to a community of knights who proposed to live a semimonastic life while defending the Christian kingdom of Jerusalem. As a consequence, this new elite fighting force became known as the *Knights of the Temple*, or simply the *Templars*.

⁴Around 1140.

⁵The niche in every mosque that indicates the direction of Mecca, toward which all Muslims pray. Depending on where

a mosque is in relation to Mecca, the *qiblah* can point in any direction of the compass. In Christian Europe, however, it was the custom to build altars so that the priest and worshipers standing before them faced east, the general direction of Jerusalem from western Europe. Ironically, the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, the site in Jerusalem in whose direction European Christians prayed, lies about four hundred yards northwest of al-Aqsa.

⁶*Amir* (commander) was a title bestowed on military leaders and local lords.

⁷Also located on the Temple Mount, this late-seventh-century, octagonal Islamic shrine is located above the rock tip of Mount Moriah, the site which tradition identifies as the holy of holies of the temple of Solomon.

The peasant thereupon came back to the king and said, "Let justice be done in my case. I challenge to a duel the man who claimed that I guided the thieves to the village." The king then said to the tenant who held the village in fief, "Bring forth someone to fight the duel with him." The tenant went to his village, where a blacksmith lived, took hold of him and ordered him to fight the duel. The tenant became thus sure of the safety of his own peasants, none of whom would be killed and his estate ruined.

I saw this blacksmith. He was a physically strong young man, but his heart failed him. He would walk a few steps and then sit down and ask for a drink. The one who had made the challenge was an old man, but he was strong in spirit and he would rub the nail of his thumb against that of the forefinger in defiance, as if he was not worrying over the duel. Then came the viscount, i.e., the lord of the town, and gave each one of the two contestants a cudgel and a shield and arranged the people in a circle around them.

The two met. The old man would press the blacksmith backward until he would get him as far as the circle, then he would come back to the middle of the arena. They went on exchanging blows until they looked like pillars smeared with blood. The contest was prolonged and the viscount began to urge them to hurry, saying, "Hurry on." The fact that the smith was given to the use of the hammer proved now of great advantage to him. The old man was worn out and the smith gave him a blow which made him fall. His cudgel fell under his back. The smith knelt down over him and tried to stick his fingers into the eyes of his adversary, but could not do it because of the great quantity of blood flowing out. Then he rose up and hit his head with the cudgel until he killed him. They then fastened a rope around the neck of the dead person, dragged him away and hanged him. The lord who brought the smith now came, gave the smith his own mantle, made him mount the horse

behind him and rode off with him. This case illustrates the kind of jurisprudence and legal decisions the Franks have — may Allah's curse be upon them!

Ordeal by Water

I once went in the company of al-Amir Mu'in-al-Din (may Allah's mercy rest upon his soul!) to Jerusalem. We stopped at Nablus. There a blind man, a Muslim, who was still young and was well dressed, presented himself before al-Amir carrying fruits for him and asked permission to be admitted into his service in Damascus.⁸ The amir consented. I inquired about this man and was informed that his mother had been married to a Frank whom she had killed. Her son used to practice ruses against the Frankish pilgrims and cooperate with his mother in assassinating them. They finally brought charges against him and tried his case according to the Frankish way of procedure.

They installed a huge cask and filled it with water. Across it they set a board of wood. They then bound the arms of the man charged with the act, tied a rope around his shoulders and dropped him into the cask, their idea being that in case he was innocent, he would sink in the water and they would then lift him up with the rope so that he might not die in the water; and in case he was guilty, he would not sink in the water. This man did his best to sink when they dropped him into the water, but he could not do it. So he had to submit to their sentence against him — may Allah's curse be upon them! They pierced his eyeballs with red-hot awls.

Later the same man arrived in Damascus. Al-Amir Mu'in-al-Din (may Allah's mercy rest upon his soul!) assigned him a stipend large enough to meet all his needs and said to a slave of his, "Conduct him to Burhan-al-Din al-Balkhi (may Allah's mercy rest upon his soul!) and ask him on my behalf to order somebody to teach this man the Qur'an and something of Muslim jurisprudence." . . .

⁸One of the two major Muslim-held cities in Syria.

*A Frank Domesticated in Syria
Abstains from Eating Pork*

Among the Franks are those who have become acclimatized and have associated long with the Muslims. These are much better than the recent comers from the Frankish lands. But they constitute the exception and cannot be treated as a rule.

Here is an illustration. I dispatched one of my men to Antioch⁹ on business. There was in Antioch at that time al-Ra'is Theodoros Sophianos,¹⁰ to whom I was bound by mutual ties of amity. His influence in Antioch was supreme. One day he said to my man, "I am invited by a friend of mine who is a Frank. You should come with me so that you may see their fashions." My man related the story in the following words:

I went along with him and we came to the home of a knight who belonged to the old category of knights who came with the early expeditions of the Franks. He had been by that time stricken off the register and exempted from service, and possessed in Antioch an estate on the income of which he lived. The knight presented an excellent table, with food extraordinarily clean and delicious. Seeing me

abstaining from food, he said, "Eat, be of good cheer! I never eat Frankish dishes, but I have Egyptian women cooks and never eat except their cooking. Besides, pork never enters my home."¹¹

I ate, but guardedly, and after that we departed.

As I was passing in the market place, a Frankish woman all of a sudden hung to my clothes and began to mutter words in their language, and I could not understand what she was saying. This made me immediately the center of a big crowd of Franks. I was convinced that death was at hand. But all of a sudden that same knight approached. On seeing me, he came and said to that woman, "What is the matter between you and this Muslim?" She replied, "This is he who has killed my brother Hurso." This Hurso was a knight in Afamiyah who was killed by someone of the army of Hamah. The Christian knight shouted at her saying, "This is a bourgeois [i.e., a merchant] who neither fights nor attends a fight." He also yelled at the people who had assembled, and they all dispersed. Then he took me by the hand and went away. Thus the effect of that meal was my deliverance from certain death.

⁹The chief Christian city of Syria, which fell to the crusaders in 1098.

¹⁰The name indicates he was a Byzantine Greek.

¹¹Islamic law prohibits the eating of pork, which Muslims consider to be an unclean food.

Sinbad's First Voyage



78 ▼ A THOUSAND AND ONE ARABIAN NIGHTS

Reading sources 76 and 77 in isolation might give us the impression that war was the primary reality of this thousand-year period of Southwest Asian history. That would be an incorrect conclusion. It is true that many different empire builders and invaders marched across this crossroad of the Afro-Eurasian World, and in the process they destroyed and altered much. Equally true, however, was the fact that villages, towns, and cities prospered in large numbers, fed by the productive activities of peasants, artisans, and merchants alike. Farming, craft production, and even large-scale industrial manufacture contributed to a healthy economy,

but all these activities paled in comparison with the economic impact of commerce, particularly transit trade. Evidence suggests that Southwest Asian production of commodities for export declined from the eleventh century onward, whereas trade in manufactured goods produced elsewhere, primarily China, India, and Western Europe, rose appreciably. Added to this was a booming trade in the raw materials of Africa and Southeast Asia, including slaves, ivory, and gold from Africa and exotic woods and spices from the eastern islands of the Indian Ocean. Merchants who engaged in long-distance commerce could become rapidly wealthy and rise to positions of eminence within their cities.

This was especially the case with the merchants of Iraq. One ninth-century Arab geographer described Iraq as "the center of the world, the navel of the Earth." Iraq's centrality, and its consequent prosperity, was a function of its lying at the head of the Persian Gulf. The Persian Gulf afforded the merchants of Baghdad and Basra access to the Indian Ocean and the rich markets of the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea. The potential for wealth was great for any Iraqi merchant who was sufficiently enterprising, courageous, skilled, and lucky. Danger, however, lay around every corner, as the following tale from *A Thousand and One Arabian Nights* suggests.

A Thousand and One Arabian Nights is one of the most celebrated collections of stories in the world. Loosely arranged around the theme of a series of nightly stories — told by Shahrazad in order to forestall decapitation by the order of her disturbed husband, Shahriyar, king of India and China — *The Arabian Nights* is a rich pastiche of Persian, Arabic, Greco-Roman, Indian, and Egyptian fables and legends. Its core is a now-lost ancient Persian collection known as *A Thousand Tales*, which tenth-century Arab commentators tell us was similarly structured around Queen Shahrazad's ingenious filibuster. This Persian work served as the matrix around which numerous anonymous Arab storytellers wove additional tales, especially out of the rich folk traditions of Iraq and Egypt, to create, by the fourteenth century, *The Arabian Nights* as we more or less know it today.

A major Arab addition to this constantly changing treasury of tales was the Sinbad cycle — seven stories that related the merchant voyages of one of literature's most celebrated adventurers. In the course of his seven voyages into the Indian Ocean, Sinbad narrowly escaped death at the hands of pirates and cannibals, monster birds and huge serpents, storms and whirlpools, and the murderous one-eyed Cyclops and the Old Man of the Sea. In his travels he discovered such fabled places as the valley of diamonds, the land where living people were buried alive with their deceased spouses, and the ivory-rich elephant burying ground. Not only did he survive to tell his tales, but each voyage left him wealthier than before.

Doubtless the professional storytellers who recounted the adventures of this fictional merchant-sailor deliberately employed hyperbolic flights of fancy because their purpose was to present thrilling entertainment. Yet the more fantastic elements within the stories also hint at some of the ways in which the world of the Indian Ocean was viewed from the perspective of Iraq.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. How did an Arab merchant of modest means undertake the expense of outfitting a ship and filling it with cargo?
2. What do the goods that Sinbad brought back with him suggest about the nature of commerce in the Indian Ocean?
3. Consider the wonders that Sinbad reported. What do they suggest about the level of Arab knowledge of the more distant regions of the Indian Ocean? What do they suggest about Arab attitudes toward the eastern Indian Ocean?
4. It has been said that this tale illustrates the ambivalence of the Iraqi World toward the vast region of the Indian Ocean? Do you agree? Why or why not?
5. What might we infer from this story about the role and status of merchants in Arabic society?

I dissipated the greatest part of my paternal inheritance in the excesses of my youth; but at length, seeing my folly, I became convinced that riches were not of much use when applied to such purposes as I had employed them in; and I moreover reflected that the time I spent in dissipation was of still greater value than gold, and that nothing could be more truly deplorable than poverty in old age. I recollected the words of the wise Solomon, which my father had often repeated to me, that it is better to be in the grave than poor. Feeling the truth of all these reflections, I resolved to collect the small remains of my patrimony and to sell my goods by auction. I then formed connections with some merchants who had negotiations by sea, and consulted those who appeared best able to give me advice. In short, I determined to employ to some profit the small sum I had remaining, and no sooner was this resolution formed than I put it into execution. I went to Basra,¹ where I embarked with several merchants in a vessel which had been equipped at our united expense.

We set sail and steered toward the East Indies by the Persian Gulf, which is formed by the coast of Arabia on the right, and by that of Persia on the left, and is commonly supposed to be seventy leagues² in breadth in the widest part; beyond this gulf the Western Sea, or Indian Ocean, is very spacious, and is bounded by the coast of Abyssinia,³ extending in length four thousand five hundred leagues to the island of Vakvak.⁴ I was at first rather incommoded with what is termed sea-sickness, but I soon recovered my health; and from that period I have never been subject to that malady. In the course of our voyage we touched at several islands, and sold or exchanged our merchandise. One day, when in full sail, we were unexpectedly becalmed before a small island appearing just above the water, and which, from its green color, resembled a beautiful meadow. The captain ordered the sails to be lowered, and gave permission to those who wished it to go ashore, of which number I formed one. But during the time that we were regaling ourselves with eating and drinking, by way of

¹Basra, located at the northern tip of the Persian Gulf and connected to Baghdad by the Tigris River, is Iraq's entryway to the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean.

²A league is three miles.

³The horn of Africa: the region of the modern nations of Ethiopia and Somalia.

⁴Possibly a reference to Sumatra.

relaxation from the fatigues we had endured at sea, the island suddenly trembled, and we felt a severe shock.

They who were in the ship perceived the earthquake in the island, and immediately called to us to re-embark as soon as possible, or we should all perish, for what we supposed to be an island was no more than the back of a whale. The most active of the party jumped into the boat, whilst others threw themselves into the water to swim to the ship: as for me, I was still on the island, or, more properly speaking, on the whale, when it plunged into the sea, and I had only time to seize hold of a piece of wood which had been brought to make a fire with. Meantime the captain, willing to avail himself of a fair breeze which had sprung up, set sail with those who had reached his vessel, and left me to the mercy of the waves. I remained in this situation the whole of that day and the following night; and on the return of morning I had neither strength nor hope left, when a breaker happily dashed me on an island. The shore was high and steep, and I should have found great difficulty in landing, had not some roots of trees, which fortune seemed to have furnished for my preservation, assisted me. I threw myself on the ground, where I continued, more than half dead, till the sun rose.

Although I was extremely enfeebled by the fatigues I had undergone, I tried to creep about in search of some herb or fruit that might satisfy my hunger. I found some, and had also the good luck to meet with a stream of excellent water, which contributed not a little to my recovery. Having in a great measure regained my strength, I began to explore the island, and entered a beautiful plain, where I perceived at some distance a horse that was grazing. I bent my steps that way, trembling between fear and joy, for I could not ascertain whether I was advancing to safety or perdition. I remarked, as I approached, that it was a mare tied to a stake: her beauty attracted my attention; but whilst I was admiring her, I heard a voice underground of a man, who shortly after appeared, and coming to me, asked me who I was. I related my adventure to him; after which

he took me by the hand and led me into a cave, where there were some other persons, who were not less astonished to see me than I was to find them there.

I ate some food which they offered me; and having asked them what they did in a place which appeared so barren, they replied that they were grooms to King Mihrage, who was the sovereign of that isle, and that they came every year about that time with some mares belonging to the king, for the purpose of having a breed between them and a sea-horse which came on shore at that spot. They tied the mares in that manner, because they were obliged almost immediately, by their cries, to drive back the sea-horse, otherwise he began to tear them in pieces. As soon as the mares were with foal they carried them back, and these colts were called sea-colts, and set apart for the king's use. To-morrow, they added, was the day fixed for their departure, and if I had been one day later I must certainly have perished, because they lived so far off that it was impossible to reach their habitations without a guide.

Whilst they were talking to me, the horse rose out of the sea as they had described, and immediately attacked the mares. He would then have torn them to pieces, but the grooms began to make such a noise that he let go his prey, and again plunged into the ocean.

The following day they returned to the capital of the island with the mares, whither I accompanied them. On our arrival, King Mihrage, to whom I was presented, asked me who I was, and by what chance I had reached his dominions; and when I had satisfied his curiosity, he expressed pity at my misfortune. At the same time, he gave orders that I should be taken care of and have everything I might want. These orders were executed in a manner that proved the king's generosity, as well as the exactness of his officers.

As I was a merchant, I associated with persons of my own profession. I sought, in particular, such as were foreigners, as much to hear some intelligence of Baghdad, as with the hope of

meeting with some one whom I could return with; for the capital of King Mihrage is situated on the sea-coast, and has a beautiful port, where vessels from all parts of the world daily arrive. I also sought the society of the Indian sages, and found great pleasure in their conversation; this, however, did not prevent me from attending at court very regularly, nor from conversing with the governors of provinces, and some less powerful kings, tributaries of Mihrage, who were about his person. They asked me a thousand questions about my country; and I, on my part, was not less inquisitive about the laws and customs of their different states, or whatever appeared to merit my curiosity.

In the dominions of King Mihrage there is an island called Cassel. I had been told that in that island there was heard every night the sound of cymbals, which had given rise to the sailors' opinion, that al-Dajjal⁵ had chosen that spot for his residence. I felt a great desire to witness these wonders, and during my voyage I saw some fish of one and two hundred cubits in length,⁶ which occasion much fear, but do no harm; they are so timid that they are frightened away by beating on a board. I remarked also some other fish that were not above a cubit long, and whose heads resembled that of an owl.

After I returned, as I was standing one day near the port, I saw a ship come toward the land; when they had cast anchor, they began to unload its goods, and the merchants, to whom they belonged, took them away to their warehouses. Happening to cast my eyes on some of the packages, I saw my name written, and, having attentively examined them, I concluded them to be those which I had embarked in the ship in which I left Basra. I also recollected the captain; but as I was persuaded that he thought me dead, I went up to him, and asked him to whom those parcels belonged. "I had on board with me," replied he,

"a merchant of Baghdad, named Sinbad. One day, when we were near an island, at least such it appeared to be, he, with some other passengers, went ashore on this supposed island, which was no other than an enormous whale, that had fallen asleep on the surface of the water. The fish no sooner felt the heat of the fire they had lighted on its back, to cook their provisions, than it began to move and flounce about in the sea. The greatest part of the persons who were on it were drowned, and the unfortunate Sinbad was one of the number. These parcels belonged to him, and I have resolved to sell them, that, if I meet with any of his family, I may be able to return them the profit I shall have made of the principal." "Captain," said I then, "I am that Sinbad, whom you supposed dead, but who is still alive, and these parcels are my property and merchandise."

When the captain of the vessel heard me speak thus, he exclaimed, "Great God! whom shall I trust? There is no longer truth in man. I with my own eyes saw Sinbad perish; the passengers I had on board were also witnesses of it; and you have the assurance to say that you are the same Sinbad? what audacity! At first sight you appeared a man of probity and honor, yet you assert an impious falsity to possess yourself of some merchandise which does not belong to you." "Have patience," replied I, "and have the goodness to listen to what I have to say." "Well," said he, "what can you have to say? speak, and I will attend." I then related in what manner I had been saved, and by what accident I had met with King Mihrage's grooms, who had brought me to his court.

He was rather staggered at my discourse, but was soon convinced that I was not an impostor; for some people arriving from his ship knew me, and began to congratulate me on my fortunate escape. At last he recollected me himself, and embracing me, "Heaven be praised," said he,

⁵The *deceiver*, or *imposter*, al-Dajjal is the false messiah who, according to Islamic belief, will appear shortly before Jesus returns to Earth to usher in the end of time. Jesus will destroy al-Dajjal, and the Day of Judgment will follow.

⁶A cubit varies from seventeen to twenty-two inches.

"that you have thus happily avoided so great a danger; I cannot express the pleasure I feel on the occasion. Here are your goods, take them, for they are yours, and do with them as you like." I thanked him, and praised his honorable conduct, and by way of recompense I begged him to accept part of the merchandise, but that he refused.

I selected the most precious and valuable things in my bales, as presents for King Mihrage. As this prince had been informed of my misfortunes, he asked me where I had obtained such rare curiosities. I related to him the manner in which I had recovered my property, and he had the complaisance to express his joy on the occasion; he accepted my presents, and gave me others of far greater value. After that, I took my leave of him, and re-embarked in the same vessel, having first exchanged what merchandise remained with that of the country, which consisted of aloes and sandal-wood,⁷ camphor,⁸ nutmegs, cloves, pepper, and ginger. We touched at several islands, and at last landed at Basra, from

whence I came here, having realized about a hundred thousand sequins.⁹ I returned to my family, and was received by them with the joy which a true and sincere friendship inspires. I purchased slaves of each sex, and bought a magnificent house and grounds. I thus established myself, determined to forget the disagreeable things I had endured, and to enjoy the pleasures of life. . . .

I had resolved after my first voyage, to pass the rest of my days in tranquility at Baghdad. . . . But I soon grew weary of an idle life; the desire of seeing foreign countries, and carrying on some negotiations by sea returned: I bought some merchandise, which I thought likely to answer in the traffic I meditated; and I set off a second time with some merchants, upon whose probity I could rely. We embarked in a good vessel, and having recommended ourselves to the care of the Almighty, we began our voyage. . . .

▷ And so the second voyage begins.

⁷Both are woods noted for their aromatic and medicinal properties.

⁸A medicinal drug and aromatic made from camphor wood.
⁹Gold coins.

India: Continuity and Change

Invasions from Central Asia by a nomadic people known as the *Hunas*, or White Huns, precipitated the collapse of the Gupta Empire around the middle of the sixth century. Northern India was again politically fragmented, but Hindu culture, having reached maturity in the Gupta Age, continued to develop vigorously. Indeed, the history of classical India is largely the story of cultural continuity and evolution, in which political events and their chronology, although important, are less central to the story. The one significant exception to this rule in the period 500–1500 was the coming of Islam. Its impact was profound and permanent.

Early in the eighth century, Arabs conquered the northwest corner of the Indian subcontinent, a region known as *Sind*, but advanced no farther. While Hindu civilization moved to its own rhythms, neighboring Muslims traded with it and freely borrowed whatever they found useful and nonthreatening to their Islamic faith. This included India's decimal mathematics and the so-called Arabic system of numeration, so named by Europeans because they learned this arithmetical

system secondhand from Arab merchants, who transformed it into a tool of the marketplace. After millennia of contemplating the reality of Nothingness, Hindu civilization during the Gupta Era formulated the principal of *zero* as a positive numerical value, and India's Arab neighbors happily adopted the concept and passed it on.

Islam did not make a significant impact on Indian life until the appearance of the Turks. These recent converts to the faith, whose origins lay in Central Asia, conducted a series of raids out of Afghanistan between 986 and 1030. After a respite of about 150 years, they turned to conquest. In 1192 the army of Muhammad of Ghor crushed a coalition of Indian princes, and the whole Ganges Basin lay defenseless before his generals. By 1206 the Turkish sultanate of Delhi dominated all of northern India, and by 1327 it had extended its power over virtually the entire peninsula. Although these Turkish sultans lost the south to the Hindu state of Vijayanagar (1336–1565), they controlled India's northern and central regions until the arrival of other Islamic conquerors: first, Timur the Lame's plundering horde in 1398; then Babur, who established the great Mughal Dynasty (1526–1857), which ruled most of India until the mid eighteenth century.

As the modern Islamic states of Pakistan and Bangladesh bear witness, Islam became an important element in Indian society, but in the end Hinduism prevailed as the way of life for the majority of the Indian subcontinent's people. The coming and going of armies destroyed the vital remnants of Buddhist monasticism in mainland India, although it continued to flourish on the island of Ceylon (Sri Lanka). Nothing, however, could root out the hold that the many varieties of Hindu belief and custom had upon Indian life.

Islam and Hindu Civilization: Cultures in Conflict



79 ▼ *Abu'l Raihan al-Biruni,* *DESCRIPTION OF INDIA*

At the end of the tenth century, Sultan Mahmud of Ghazana (r. 998–1030), who proudly bore the titles the *Sword of Islam* and the *Image Breaker*, began a series of seventeen raids through the Khyber Pass and into India from his base just south of Kabul in modern Afghanistan. This Turkish lord made no serious attempt at conquering all of India, but he did incorporate into his lands part of the subcontinent's northwestern region of Punjab (an area that today is part of the Islamic state of Pakistan). For a century and a half after Mahmud's death, Islam penetrated no farther into India, but the precedent of Islamic jihad against infidel Hindus had been established.

The riches that Mahmud accumulated from his plunder and destruction of Hindu temples (he is reputed to have carried off six and one-half tons of gold from one expedition alone) enabled him to turn his otherwise remote, mountain-ringed capital of Ghazana into a major center of Islamic culture. Scholars and artists from all over Southwest Asia gathered at Mahmud's court. Many came willingly; others were forced to come. In 1017 Mahmud conquered the Central

Asian Islamic state of Khwarazm, located west of Ghazana and just south of the Aral Sea. The conqueror brought back many of Khwarazm's intellectuals and artisans to his capital, including the Iranian scholar Abu'l Raihan al-Biruni (973–ca. 1050).

Known to subsequent generations as *al-Ustadh* (the Master), al-Biruni was primarily an astronomer, mathematician, and linguist, but his wide-ranging interests and intellect involved him in many other fields of inquiry. For thirteen years following his capture, al-Biruni served Mahmud, probably as court astrologer, and traveled with him into India's Punjab region. Here, apparently, al-Biruni spent the bulk of his period of service to Mahmud. Shortly after his lord's death in 1030, al-Biruni completed his *Description of India*, an encyclopedic account of Indian civilization, especially Hindu science. The following excerpts come from the book's opening pages, in which the author deals with the essential differences that separate Hindus from Muslims.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. According to al-Biruni, what separates Muslims from Hindus?
2. Where in previous sources have we seen the Hindu notions of purity and *mleccha*? By what other names or terms do you know this phenomenon?
3. What impact did eighth-century Islam have on India?
4. What impact did Mahmud and his father have on India?
5. Al-Biruni presents a critique of Hindu science and compares it with Greek science (and implicitly with Islamic science). In so doing, he faults Hindu scientists for certain basic failings. What are they? Review Chapter 6, source 43. What basic Hindu vision of reality might have influenced a scientific tradition that followed a path different from that of the Greeks and the Muslims?
6. What is the general tone of this entire excerpt, and what do you infer from it?

ON THE HINDUS IN GENERAL, AS AN INTRODUCTION TO OUR ACCOUNT OF THEM.

Before entering on our exposition, we must form an adequate idea of that which renders it so particularly difficult to penetrate to the essential nature of any Indian subject. The knowledge of these difficulties will either facilitate the progress of our work, or serve as an apology for any shortcomings of ours. For the reader must always bear in mind that the Hindus entirely differ from us in every respect, many a subject appearing intricate and obscure which would be perfectly clear

if there were more connection between us. The barriers which separate Muslims and Hindus rest on different causes.

First, they differ from us in everything which other nations have in common. And here we first mention the language, although the difference of language also exists between other nations. . . .

Secondly, they totally differ from us in religion, as we believe in nothing in which they believe, and *vice versa*. On the whole, there is very little disputing about theological topics among themselves; at the utmost, they fight with words, but they will never stake their soul or body or their property on religious controversy. On the

contrary, all their fanaticism is directed against those who do not belong to them — against all foreigners. They call them *mleccha*, *i.e.* impure, and forbid having any connection with them, be it by intermarriage or any other kind of relationship, or by sitting, eating, and drinking with them, because thereby, they think, they would be polluted. They consider as impure anything which touches the fire and the water of a foreigner; and no household can exist without these two elements. Besides, they never desire that a thing which once has been polluted should be purified and thus recovered, as, under ordinary circumstances, if anybody or anything has become unclean, he or it would strive to regain the state of purity. They are not allowed to receive anybody who does not belong to them, even if he wished it, or was inclined to their religion. This, too, renders any connection with them quite impossible, and constitutes the widest gulf between us and them.

In the third place, in all manners and usages they differ from us to such a degree as to frighten their children with us, with our dress, and our ways and customs, and as to declare us to be devil's breed, and our doings as the very opposite of all that is good and proper. By the way, we must confess, in order to be just, that a similar depreciation of foreigners not only prevails among us and the Hindus, but is common to all nations towards each other. I recollect a Hindu who wreaked his vengeance on us for the following reason: —

Some Hindu king had perished at the hand of an enemy¹ of his who had marched against him from our country. After his death there was born a child to him, which succeeded him, by the name of Sagara. On coming of age, the young man asked his mother about his father, and then she told him what had happened. Now he was inflamed with hatred, marched out of his coun-

try into the country of the enemy, and plentifully satiated his thirst of vengeance upon them. After having become tired of slaughtering, he compelled the survivors to dress in our dress, which was meant as an ignominious punishment for them. When I heard of it, I felt thankful that he was gracious enough not to compel us to Indianise ourselves and to adopt Hindu dress and manners. . . .

But then came Islam;² the Persian empire perished, and the repugnance of the Hindus against foreigners increased more and more when the Muslims began to make their inroads into their country; for Muhammad Ibn al-Qasim entered Sind³ . . . and conquered the cities of Bahmanwa and Mulasthana, the former of which he called *Al-mansura*, the latter *Al-ma'mura*. He entered India proper, and penetrated even as far as Kanauj, marched through the country of Gandhara, and on his way back, through the confines of Kashmir,⁴ sometimes fighting sword in hand, sometimes gaining his ends by treaties, leaving to the people their ancient belief, except in the case of those who wanted to become Muslims. All these events planted a deeply rooted hatred in their hearts.

Now in the following times no Muslim conqueror passed beyond the frontier of Kabul and the river Sind until the days of the Turks, when they seized the power in Ghazna under the Samani dynasty, and the supreme power fell to the lot of Sabuktigin. This prince chose the holy war as his calling, and therefore called himself *al-Ghazi*.⁵ In the interest of his successors he constructed, in order to weaken the Indian frontier, those roads on which afterwards his son Mahmud marched into India during a period of thirty years and more. God be merciful to both father and son! Mahmud utterly ruined the prosperity of the country, and performed there wonderful exploits, by which the Hindus became like

¹Apparently a Hindu enemy who had used the land beyond the Khyber Pass as a refuge and point from which to attack.

²The initial rise of Islam in the seventh century.

³In 711.

⁴The mountainous northwestern region that separates the modern nations of Pakistan and India and which today is disputed territory.

⁵The holy warrior.

atoms of dust scattered in all directions, and like a tale of old in the mouth of the people. Their scattered remains cherish, of course, the most inveterate aversion towards all Muslims. This is the reason, too, why Hindu sciences have retired far away from those parts of the country conquered by us, and have fled to places which our hand cannot yet reach, to Kashmir, Benares,⁶ and other places. And there the antagonism between them and all foreigners receives more and more nourishment both from political and religious sources.

In the fifth place, there are other causes, the mentioning of which sounds like satire — peculiarities of their national character, deeply rooted in them, but manifest to everybody. We can only say, folly is an illness for which there is no medicine, and the Hindus believe that there is no country but theirs, no nation like theirs, no kings like theirs, no religion like theirs, no science like theirs. They are haughty, foolishly vain, self-conceited, and stolid. They are by nature niggardly in communicating that which they know, and they take the greatest possible care to withhold it from men of another caste among their own people, still much more, of course, from any foreigner. According to their belief, there is no other country on earth but theirs, no other race of man but theirs, and no created beings besides them have any knowledge of science whatsoever. . . . If they traveled and mixed with other nations, they would soon change their mind, for their ancestors were not as narrow-minded as the present generation is. One of their scholars, Varahamihira,⁷ in a passage where he calls on the people to honor the Brahmins, says: "*The Greeks, though impure, must be honored, since they were trained in sciences and therein excelled others. What, then, are we to say of a Brahmin, if he combines with his purity the height of science?*" In former times, the Hindus used to acknowledge that the progress of science

due to the Greeks is much more important than that which is due to themselves. But from this passage of Varahamihira alone you see what a self-lauding man he is, while he gives himself airs as doing justice to others. . . .

The heathen Greeks, before the rise of Christianity, held much the same opinions as the Hindus; their educated classes thought much the same as those of the Hindus; their common people held the same idolatrous views as those of the Hindus. Therefore I like to confront the theories of the one nation with those of the other simply on account of their close relationship, not in order to correct them. For that which is not *the truth*⁸ does not admit of any correction and all heathenism, whether Greek or Indian, is in its heart and soul one and the same belief, because it is only a deviation *from the truth*. The Greeks, however, had philosophers who, living in their country, discovered and worked out for them the elements of science, not of popular superstition, for it is the object of the upper classes to be guided by the results of science, while the common crowd will always be inclined to plunge into wrong-headed wrangling, as long as they are not kept down by fear of punishment. Think of Socrates when he opposed the crowd of his nation as to their idolatry and did not want to call the stars gods! At once eleven of the twelve judges of the Athenians agreed on a sentence of death, and Socrates died faithful to the truth.⁹

The Hindus had no men of this stamp both capable and willing to bring sciences to a classical perfection. Therefore you mostly find that even the so-called scientific theorems of the Hindus are in a state of utter confusion, devoid of any logical order, and in the last instance always mixed up with the silly notions of the crowd, e.g. immense numbers, enormous spaces of time, and all kinds of religious dogmas, which the vulgar belief does not admit of being called into

⁶A city on the Ganges River in central northeast India, it is a sacred site of both Hindu and Buddhist pilgrimage.

⁷An astronomer and astrologer of the early sixth century (ca. 505), he was one of Gupta India's greatest scientists.

⁸The true faith of Islam.

⁹See Chapter 4, source 30. Al-Biruni's facts regarding the trial of Socrates are not correct.

question. . . . I can only compare their mathematical and astronomical literature, as far as I know it, to a mixture of pearl shells and sour dates, or of pearls and dung, or of costly crystals

and common pebbles. Both kinds of things are equal in their eyes, since they cannot raise themselves to the methods of a strictly scientific deduction.¹⁰

¹⁰That is, logical argumentation, especially according to the system created by Aristotle, a Greek scientist-philosopher of the fourth century B.C.E. Aristotle's logic, which had a profound impact on both Islamic and Western science

and philosophical thought, was based on the *principle of contradiction*: An entity either *is* or *is not*; it cannot simultaneously be both.

The Perfect Wife



80 ▼ Dandin, *TALES OF THE TEN PRINCES*

India's earliest known novels date from the sixth and seventh centuries, and the first acknowledged master of this art form was Dandin, who lived around 600. His *Tales of Ten Princes* is an ingenious interweaving of numerous subplots and stories around the central theme of the adventures of Prince Rajavahana. All of these stories celebrate the three things Dandin believed all people hold most dear in life on Earth: virtue, wealth, and love. As such, they illustrate the other side of the Hindu vision of the physical world. Although one of the basic insights of Hindu religion is that all material existence is transitory and unreal, as a practical matter Hindus accept *kama* (delight in the sensual pleasures of life) and *artha* (pursuit of riches and power) as valid human responses to the attractions of this world. As is true of many of the stories that Dandin told, the following vignette sheds light on everyday life and values.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. Consider Saktikumara's inspection of his prospective bride. What does that scene suggest?
2. According to this story, what qualities does the ideal wife possess?
3. What does a man expect to receive in an ideal marriage? What is he expected to give in return?
4. Compare this story with the view of women provided by the *Laws of Manu* (Chapter 5, source 38). Are they similar or different? Together, what do they allow us to infer about the role and status of women in Hindu society?

"In the land of the Dravidians¹ is a city called Kanci. Therein dwelt the very wealthy son of a merchant, by name Saktikumara. When he was nearly eighteen he thought: 'There's no pleasure in living without a wife or with one of bad character. Now how can I find a really good one?' So, dubious of his chance of finding wedded bliss with a woman taken at the word of others, he became a fortune-teller, and roamed the land with a measure of unhusked rice tied in the skirts of his robe; and parents, taking him for an interpreter of birthmarks, showed their daughters to him. Whenever he saw a girl of his own caste, whatever her birthmarks, he would say to her: 'My dear girl, can you cook me a good meal from this measure of rice?' And so, ridiculed and rejected, he wandered from house to house.

"One day in the land of the Sibis, in a city on the banks of the Kaveri, he examined a girl who was shown to him by her nurse. She wore little jewelry, for her parents had spent their fortune, and had nothing left but their dilapidated mansion. As soon as he set eyes on her he thought: 'This girl is shapely and smooth in all her members. Not one limb is too fat or too thin, too short or too long. Her fingers are pink; her hands are marked with auspicious lines — the barley-corn, the fish, the lotus, and the vase; her ankles are shapely; her feet are plump and the veins are not prominent; her thighs curve smoothly; her knees can barely be seen, for they merge into her rounded thighs; her buttocks are dimpled and round as chariot wheels; her naval is small, flat, and deep; her stomach is adorned with three lines; the nipples stand out from her large breasts, which cover her whole chest; her palms are marked with signs which promise corn, wealth, and sons; her nails are smooth and polished like jewels; her fingers are straight and tapering and pink; her arms curve sweetly from the shoulder, and are smoothly jointed; her slender neck is curved like a conch-shell; her lips are rounded

and of even red; her pretty chin does not recede; her cheeks are round, full and firm; her eyebrows do not join above her nose, and are curved, dark, and even; her nose is like a half-blown sesamum flower; her wide eyes are large and gentle and flash with three colors, black, white, and brown; her brow is fair as the new moon; her curls are lovely as a mine of sapphires; her long ears are adorned doubly, with earrings and charming lotuses, hanging limply; her abundant hair is not brown, even at the tips, but long, smooth, glossy, and fragrant. The character of such a girl cannot but correspond to her appearance, and my heart is fixed upon her, so I'll test her and marry her. For one regret after another is sure to fall on the heads of people who don't take precautions!' So, looking at her affectionately, he said, 'Dear girl, can you cook a good meal for me with this measure of rice?'

"Then the girl glanced at her old servant, who took the measure of rice from his hand and seated him on the veranda, which had been well sprinkled and swept, giving him water to cool his feet. Meanwhile the girl bruised the fragrant rice, dried it a little at a time in the sun, turned it repeatedly, and beat it with a hollow cane on a firm flat spot, very gently, so as to separate the grain without crushing the husk. Then she said to the nurse, 'Mother,² goldsmiths can make good use of these husks for polishing jewelry. Take them, and, with the coppers you get for them, buy some firewood, not too green and not too dry, a small cooking pot, and two earthen dishes.'

"When this was done she put the grains of rice in a shallow, wide-mouthed, round-bellied mortar, and took a long and heavy pestle of acacia-wood, its head shod with a plate of iron. . . . With skill and grace she exerted her arms, as the grains jumped up and down in the mortar. Repeatedly she stirred them and pressed them down with her fingers; then she shook the grains in a winnowing basket to remove the beard, rinsed them

¹The dark-skinned people of the south, whose language differs radically from that of the northerners.

²She addresses her servant as "Mother" because the servant had been her wet nurse (the woman who breast-fed her when

she was an infant), and their relationship remained close throughout life. The young woman is obviously from a once-well-to-do Vaisya family.

several times, worshiped the hearth, and placed them in water which had been five times brought to the boil. When the rice softened, bubbled, and swelled, she drew the embers of the fire together, put a lid on the cooking pot, and strained off the gruel. Then she patted the rice with a ladle and scooped it out a little at a time; and when she found that it was thoroughly cooked she put the cooking pot on one side, mouth downward. Next she damped down those sticks which were not burnt through, and when the fire was quite out she sent them to the dealers to be sold as charcoal, saying, 'With the coppers that you get for them, buy as much as you can of green vegetables, ghee,³ curds, sesamum oil, myrobalans⁴ and tamarind.'⁵

"When this was done she offered him a few savories. Next she put the rice-gruel in a new dish immersed in damp sand, and cooled it with the soft breeze of a palm-leaf fan. She added a little salt, and flavored it with the scent of the embers; she ground the myrobalans to a smooth powder, until they smelt like a lotus; and then, by the lips of the nurse, she invited him to take a bath. This he did, and when she too had bathed she gave him oil and myrobalans (as an unguent).

"After he had bathed he sat on a bench in the paved courtyard, which had been thoroughly sprinkled and swept. She stirred the gruel in the two dishes, which she set before him on a piece of pale green plantain leaf, cut from a tree in the courtyard. He drank it and felt rested and happy, relaxed in every limb. Next she gave him two ladlefuls of the boiled rice, served with a little

ghee and condiments. She served the rest of the rice with curds, three spices (mace, cardamom, and cinnamon), and fragrant and refreshing buttermilk and gruel. He enjoyed the meal to the last mouthful.

"When he asked for a drink she poured him water in a steady stream from the spout of a new pitcher — it was fragrant with incense, and smelt of fresh trumpet-flowers and the perfume of full-blown lotuses. He put the bowl to his lips, and his eyelashes sparkled with rosy drops as cool as snow; his ears delighted in the sound of the trickling water; his rough cheeks thrilled and tingled at its pleasant contact; his nostrils opened wide at its sweet fragrance; and his tongue delighted in its lovely flavor, as he drank the pure water in great gulps. Then, at his nod, the girl gave him a mouthwash in another bowl. The old woman took away the remains of his meal, and he slept awhile in his ragged cloak, on the pavement plastered with fresh cowdung.

"Wholly pleased with the girl, he married her with due rites, and took her home. Later he neglected her awhile and took a mistress, but the wife treated her as a dear friend. She served her husband indefatigably, as she would a god, and never neglected her household duties; and she won the loyalty of her servants by her great kindness. In the end her husband was so enslaved by her goodness that he put the whole household in her charge, made her sole mistress of his life and person, and enjoyed the three aims of life — virtue, wealth, and love. So I maintain that virtuous wives make their lords happy and virtuous."

³Clarified butter.

⁴Edible seed from the so-called Indian almond tree.

⁵A pungent spice.

A Sati's Sacrifice



81 ▼ *VIKRAMA'S ADVENTURES*

One of the many myths regarding premodern Indian history is that a majority of widows performed ritual suicide by self-immolation on their late husbands' funeral pyres, and those who refused to go willingly to their deaths were forced into the flames. In point of fact, it was rare for widows to join their recently deceased husbands in death in ancient India. Indeed, it was only during the Gupta Era, when female remarriage began to be discouraged and even prohibited, that the practice began to become something of a tradition. Even then, death by burning was not the fate of the vast majority of widows in that or any subsequent period. There were, however, enough incidents of widow suicide and murder to shock British colonial administrators, who took over direct management of India in the mid nineteenth century and managed to suppress the practice fairly effectively.

Another myth shared by Western observers is that Indians call this practice *suttee*. There is no such word. *Suttee* is a British misunderstanding and mispronunciation of *sati*, which means "a virtuous woman." According to the social-religious traditions that supported the practice of widow burning, a widow, no matter her caste, could not remarry, for this would entail her breaking her marriage vow and endangering her husband's spiritual welfare. She was expected to live out her life in severe austerity, shunned by all but her children, in the hope of remarrying her husband in some future incarnation. If she were especially virtuous, she would choose to join her deceased husband sooner rather than later and end her present life on his funeral day. Undoubtedly some *satis* committed suicide willingly. Probably far more were forced by their husbands' relatives, for social and economic reasons, to perform this ultimate act of loyalty.

Our text, which sheds some light on this act of sacrifice, comes from an anonymous collection of stories recounting the adventures and wisdom of the semilegendary King Vikrama, or Vikramaditya, who might have lived around 58 B.C.E. The stories, as we have received them, were probably collected between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. Can a widow who refuses to immolate herself achieve moksha (release)?
2. What proprietary interest do the families to which the *sati* belongs have in her sacrifice?
3. What impact does her act have on her husband's soul? On her own?
4. What social and psychological factors make suicide appear so attractive?
5. Compare this story with the preceding one told by Dandin. How was the wife in that story a *sati*? What does she have in common with this *sati*?
6. "By her perfect selflessness, a *sati* perfects and redeems her husband." What does this anonymous statement mean? How, if at all, do both this and Dandin's story illustrate that attitude?

7. Some commentators have argued that these two stories are predicated upon the assumption that wives and husbands fulfill one another, and without the other each is incomplete. Do you agree with this analysis? Why or why not? In addressing this question, you might want to review the *Laws of Manu* (Chapter 5, source 38).

Once King Vikrama, attended by all his vassal princes, had ascended his throne. At this time a certain magician came in, and blessing him with the words "Live forever!" said: "Sire, you are skilled in all the arts; many magicians have come into your presence and exhibited their tricks. So today be so good as to behold an exhibition of my dexterity." The king said: "I have not time now; it is the time to bathe and eat. Tomorrow I will behold it." So on the morrow the juggler came into the king's assembly as a stately man, with a mighty beard and glorious countenance, holding a sword in his hand, and accompanied by a lovely woman; and he bowed to the king. Then the ministers who were present, seeing the stately man, were astonished, and asked: "O hero, who are you, and whence do you come?" He said: "I am a servant of Great Indra;¹ I was cursed once by my lord, and was cast down to earth; and now I dwell here. And this is my wife. Today a great battle has begun between the gods and the Daityas [demons], so I am going thither. This King Vikramaditya treats other men's wives as his sisters, so before going to the battle I wish to leave my wife with him." Hearing this the king also was greatly amazed. And the man left his wife with the king and delivered her over to him, and sword in hand flew up into heaven. Then a great and terrible shouting was heard in the sky: "Ho there, kill them, kill them, smite them, smite them!" were the words they heard. And all the people who sat in the court, with upturned faces, gazed in amazement. After this, when a moment had passed by, one of the man's arms, holding his sword and stained with blood, fell from the sky into the king's assembly. Then all the people, seeing it, said: "Ah, this great hero has been killed in battle by his opponents; his

sword and one arm have fallen." While the people who sat in the court were even saying this, again his head fell also; and then his trunk fell too. And seeing this his wife said: "Sire, my husband, fighting on the field of battle, has been slain by the enemy. His head, his arm, his sword, and his trunk have fallen down here. So, that this my beloved may not be wooed by the heavenly nymphs, I will go to where he is. Let fire be provided for me." Hearing her words the king said: "My daughter, why will you enter the fire? I will guard you even as my own daughter; preserve your body." She said: "Sire, what is this you say? My lord, for whom this body of mine exists, has been slain on the battlefield by his foes. Now for whose sake shall I preserve this body? Moreover, you should not say this, since even fools know that wives should follow their husbands. For thus it is said:

1. Moonlight goes with the moon, the lightning clings to the cloud, and women follow their husbands; even fools know this.

And so, as the learned tradition has it:

2. The wife who enters into the fire when her husband dies, imitating Arundhati [a star, regarded as the wife of one of the Seven Rishis (the Dipper), and as a typical faithful spouse] in her behavior, enjoys bliss in heaven.

3. Until a wife burns herself in the fire after the death of her husband, so long that woman can in no way be permanently freed from the body.

4. A woman who follows after her husband shall surely purify three families: her mother's, her father's, and that into which she was given in marriage.

And so:

¹Chapter 2, source 11.

5. Three and a half crores² is the number of the hairs on the human body; so many years shall a wife who follows her husband dwell in heaven.

6. As a snake-charmer powerfully draws a snake out of a hole, so a wife draws her husband upward [by burning herself] and enjoys bliss with him.

7. A wife who abides by the law of righteousness [in burning herself] saves her husband, whether he be good or wicked; yes, even if he be guilty of all crimes.

Furthermore, O king, a woman who is bereft of her husband has no use for her life. And it is said:

8. What profit is there in the life of a wretched woman who has lost her husband? Her body is as useless as a banyan tree in a cemetery.

9. Surely father, brother, and son measure their gifts; what woman would not honor her husband, who gives without measure?

Moreover:

10. Though a woman be surrounded by kinsfolk, though she have many sons, and be endowed with excellent qualities, she is a miserable, poor wretched creature, when deprived of her husband.

And so:

11. What shall a widow do with perfumes, garlands, and incense, or with manifold ornaments, or garments and couches of ease?

12. A lute does not sound without strings, a wagon does not go without wheels, and a wife does not obtain happiness without her husband, not even with a hundred kinsfolk.

13. Woman's highest refuge is her husband, even if he be poor, vicious, old, infirm, crippled, outcast, and stingy.

14. There is no kinsman, no friend, no protector, no refuge for a woman like her husband.

15. There is no other misery for women like widowhood. Happy is she among women who dies before her husband.

Thus speaking she fell at the king's feet, begging that a fire be provided for her. And when the king heard her words, his heart being tender with genuine compassion, he caused a pyre to be erected of sandalwood and the like, and gave her leave. So she took leave of the king, and in his presence entered the fire together with her husband's body.

²A *crore* is ten million, therefore, thirty-five million.

Chapter 10

Two Christian Civilizations

Byzantium and Western Europe

Contrary to popular belief, the Roman Empire was not a European civilization nor did the Romans think of themselves as Europeans. It is true, of course, that the city of Rome was located in Italy, which is a European peninsula, and a portion of its empire lay in lands that later became part of the community known as Europe. Nevertheless, the Roman Empire was essentially a Mediterranean civilization that encompassed the coastlands and peoples of three continents: Africa, Asia, and Europe. As such, it was a Hellenistic civilization, with all of the cultural variety that the term connotes.

During the period from roughly 235 to 600, this Mediterranean civilization underwent a transformation. Many modern historians have characterized this era as the period of “the decline and fall of the Roman Empire,” but the phrase and all that it suggests misses the mark. Rome and its empire did not fall in the sense of a sudden collapse. What happened was more subtle and profound. The Roman Empire, which embraced the cultures of so many diverse peoples, was metamorphosed over a period of centuries into three new civilizations: Byzantium, Europe, and Islam.

Islam originated in Arabia, a land beyond the boundaries of the Roman Empire, and in the mid eighth century it established its capital at Baghdad, in the heart of the former Persian Empire. Nevertheless, by conquering the lands of Syria-Palestine, all of North Africa, and most of the Iberian Peninsula, Islam inherited a good deal of Hellenistic culture, including Greek science and philosophy, and in that sense it was an heir of the Roman Empire. We have already studied Islam in Chapters 8 and 9, and it needs no further comment here. Byzantium and Europe, Rome’s other two heirs, are

another matter. It is to these two new civilizations that we now must turn.

The civilization that we term *Byzantium* receives its name from the eastern Mediterranean city of that name (*Byzantion* in Greek; *Byzantium* in Latin), which Emperor Constantine the Great transformed into the capital of the newly Christianized Roman Empire in 330. The fact that Constantine chose to locate *New Rome*, as he styled the city, in the East is testimony to the increasing unimportance of the West to the fourth-century empire. Although the city came to be called *Constantinople* (Constantine's city), modern scholars have favored using the older name — *Byzantium* — to delineate the civilization that centered on this East Roman capital. Actually, the Byzantines never called themselves anything other than *Romaioi* (Romans). From the early fourth century to 1453, when the city and its empire finally succumbed to the advances of the Ottoman Turks, Constantinople was the center of an empire and a civilization whose members viewed it as the legitimate heir of Roman imperial traditions. In fact, however, already by the late sixth century, *Byzantium* had become a distinctive civilization — a Greek-speaking civilization that retained many Hellenistic qualities but which also developed many new forms of expression and organization.

Byzantine civilization resulted from the fusion of three key elements. First there were the traditions of the late Roman Empire in which the emperor had been transformed into an autocratic ruler along the lines of the Persian *shahs*, or emperors. Then there was *Eastern Orthodox Christianity*. *Orthodox* is a Greek term that means "correct thinking," and in this context it means the time-honored traditions of eastern Mediterranean Christianity, which included folk practices as well as the teachings of theologians and church councils. The third element was the cultural heritage of the Hellenistic past, itself a fusion of Greek, western Asiatic, and Egyptian elements.

Although *Byzantium* was an empire, with definite boundaries that expanded and contracted over the centuries, as a civilization it transcended political boundaries. Byzantine traditions deeply influenced the cultures of a number of neighboring peoples, especially the Russians, Bulgars, and Serbs. In a real sense, even after the Byzantine Empire collapsed in the face of Ottoman Turkish assaults, its civilization lived on, in somewhat altered form, among such Orthodox Christian cultures as Russia, Bulgaria, and Serbia.

The story in the western half of the Roman Empire was different. Continuities were less evident, and dramatic

changes were more the norm. Whereas the empire's eastern half evolved somewhat gently into a new cultural synthesis, the western half experienced a painful process of political breakdown and sweeping cultural transformation.

Toward the end of the fourth century C.E., pressures on Rome's western frontiers become intolerable, and the western portion of the empire rapidly slid toward its unforeseen end, defeated and transformed by fringe peoples who came from beyond the borders of the Rhine and Danube rivers. By the end of the sixth century, precious little of the western half of the Roman World was still ruled by imperial Roman authority. More profoundly, these newcomers played a key role in transforming culture in the West, thereby helping to usher out the old Greco-Roman order and to lay the basis for a new civilization that many historians call the *First Europe*.

One of the enduring clichés favored by writers of history textbooks is that Europe emerged out of a fusion of three elements: the remnants of Greco-Roman civilization; Latin, or Western, Christianity; and the culture and vigor of the fringe peoples who migrated into the western regions of the late Roman Empire. As is true of so many commonplace notions, there is a good deal of truth to this statement, but it is not the complete story. These three elements differed radically from one another in many essential ways, and it took centuries for them to fuse into something resembling a coherent civilization. Even when they had achieved a level of integration, their differences continued to infuse into an emerging European civilization tensions that became identifying characteristics of the new order developing in the West. That dynamism eventually drove Europe into competition with Islam and Byzantium — a competition that would have global consequences.

Justinian the Great: The First Byzantine Emperor

Some eighteenth-century European historians considered Byzantine civilization merely an unoriginal and degenerate fossilization of late antiquity, but nothing could be further from the truth. Although the Byzantines saw their state as a living continuation of the Roman Empire, by the late sixth century Constantinople had become the matrix of a new civilization that persisted and largely flourished down to 1453, when finally the city of Constantinople fell to Ottoman Turkish forces.

The history of Byzantium is one of peaks and troughs. The pattern of triumph, decline, and recovery repeated itself continuously until Byzantium's collapse in the mid fifteenth century. One key to understanding this cycle is the power invested in the emperor (and occasionally the empress). Rarely does an individual single-handedly alter in a radical way the historical course of an empire or any other large institution, but autocratic monarchs could and did play inordinately important roles in the unfolding of Byzantine fortunes. The following sources shed light on the person and reign of Justinian the Great (r. 527–565), arguably the Eastern Roman Empire's first Byzantine emperor.

Two Imperial Portraits: Justinian and Theodora



82 ▼ *THE MOSAICS OF SAN VITALE*

The age of Justinian I (r. 527–565) was pivotal in the history of the Eastern Roman Empire. The last of the emperors of Constantinople to speak Latin as his native tongue, Justinian attempted to reconquer the West from the various Germanic tribes that had divided it into competing kingdoms. Justinian's forces invaded Italy in 535 in order to wrest it from the Ostrogoths, who had controlled the peninsula since the late fifth century. The war that ensued was protracted, bitter, and destructive. When fighting finally ceased in 553, the Ostrogoths had been eliminated as a recognizable culture, and Rome's aristocratic families likewise had disappeared from the historical record. Cities, towns, and countryside alike were in ruin. Fifteen years later, in 568, new Germanic invaders, the Lombards, carved out their own kingdom in northern Italy and several smaller, semi-independent states in parts of central and southern Italy, thereby denying Byzantium control over the entire peninsula. In effect, Justinian's attempt at reconquest enjoyed only limited, short-term success. Its major accomplishment was transforming Rome and much of Italy into a war-ravaged backwater and stripping the eastern empire of much-needed resources. After Justinian's age, the Greek-speaking emperors and people of Constantinople were forced to look less to the West and more toward their eastern, southern, and northern borders, thereby accelerating the impact of Asian influences on Byzantium's cultural development.

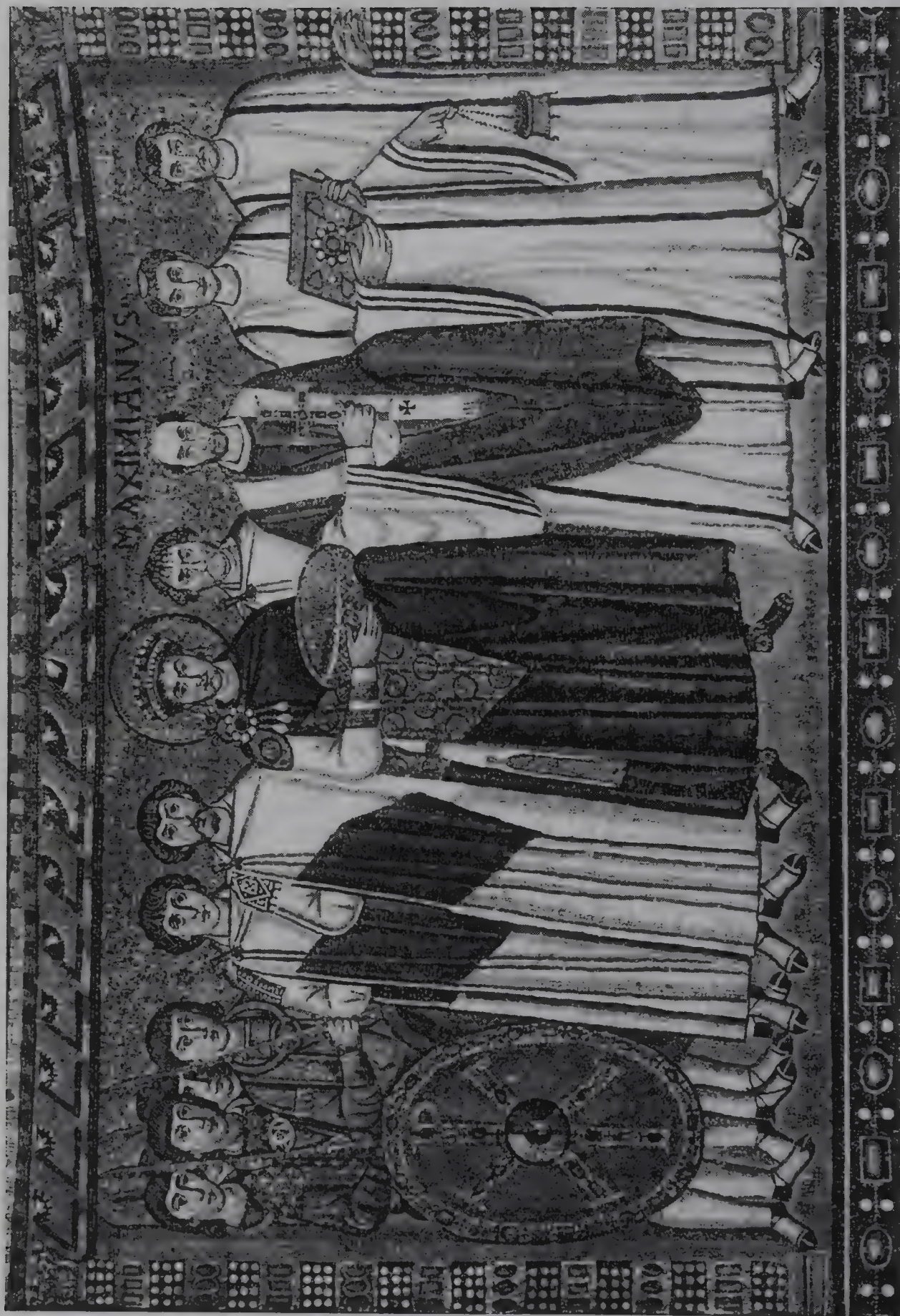
For all of his large-scale miscalculations, however, Justinian ranks as one of Byzantium's greatest emperors; indeed, he often is referred to as *Justinian the Great*, the last Roman and first Byzantine emperor. A measure of that greatness is seen in the portrait mosaics of Justinian and Empress Theodora at the Church of San Vitale in Ravenna, Italy.

Created in 548 following the capture of Ravenna by imperial troops, the two mosaics flank the altar of the church. High above the altar is a mosaic of *Christ in Glory*. Below and to Christ's right is Justinian's mosaic; opposite and to Christ's left is Theodora's mosaic. In Justinian's mosaic we see the crowned emperor, his head surrounded by a *nimbus*, or *halo*, a sign of sacred power. He wears imperial

purple and gold and carries, as an offering, the eucharistic bread, which a priest will transform at mass into the Body of Christ. On his left are four individuals: three churchmen and what appears to be a court official (the person in the background). The clerics are Maximian, archbishop of Ravenna (his name appears over his head, he holds a cross, and he wears around his shoulders an archbishop's *pallium*, a long white cloth with an embroidered cross), and two priests. One priest holds a book of Gospels (every mass has a Gospel reading from the same side of the altar on which Justinian's mosaic is located); the other holds an incense burner. On the emperor's right stand two high-ranking imperial officials and six members of the imperial bodyguard, known as the Praetorian Guard. One of the guardsmen displays a shield with the *chi-rho* monogram: the Greek letters X (chi) and P (rho), which when combined represent the word *Christos* (Christ). Empress Theodora, Justinian's wife, also appears with a crown, imperial purple and gold robes, and a halo. In her hands is a golden, bejeweled cup containing the eucharistic wine, which a priest will transform at mass into the Blood of Christ. On her left are seven court ladies, in descending order of rank; the one closest to her wears the purple of the imperial family. Two high-ranking civil officials stand on her right. One pulls back a curtain to reveal a baptismal font, the fountain in which persons are baptized into the Church.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. Theodora's mosaic places her into a definite space: an imperial palace (or possibly a church). Justinian's mosaic lacks any spatial points of reference. Does this seem significant? If so, how do you interpret the emperor's lack of specific place?
2. Based on these two mosaics, please describe the place that Empress Theodora apparently held within the empire. What was her theoretical position? What do you think were her actual powers? As always, be as specific as possible.
3. "The Byzantine emperor was perceived as the living image of God on Earth, insofar as his imperial majesty was a pale reflection of the Glory of God. As such, he was the link between the Roman Christian people and their God." In light of these mosaics, please comment in depth on this anonymous statement.
4. First study the *Barberini Ivory* (Chapter 7, source 52). Now address the following problem: Two titles borne by the emperor of Constantinople were *isapostolos* (peer of the apostles) and *autokrator* (sole ruler of the world). Do the *Barberini Ivory* and the San Vitale mosaic of Justinian symbolize either or both of these titles? Please be specific in your answer.



Emperor Justinian and His Court



Empress Theodora and Her Court

Justinian: God's Deputy or a Devil?



83 ▼ Procopius, *ON THE BUILDINGS* and *THE SECRET HISTORY*

Justinian's largely unsuccessful attempt to reconquer the West was not his only misstep. A sincerely but narrowly pious man who took seriously his duties as God-anointed emperor, Justinian also promoted the cause of Christian *Orthodoxy* (correct thinking) in a cosmopolitan empire that contained many variant Christian beliefs and ways of interpreting the faith. The result was deep alienation, especially among Egyptian and Syrian subjects of the empire, and a consequent weakness that Islamic Arab forces would exploit in the next century.

Regardless of his failures, Justinian achieved many successes. Among his accomplishments, he ordered and saw to completion the codification of imperial Roman law that had only been partially and inadequately completed by the jurists of Theodosius II (Chapter 7, source 51), and he commissioned the rebuilding of many of Constantinople's churches and public buildings following an especially destructive urban riot in 532. The greatest of all these edifices was the massive domed church of *Hagia Sophia* (Holy Wisdom), the first great example of a distinctly Byzantine style of architecture.

To celebrate Justinian's building projects, a Palestinian courtier named Procopius (d. after 562?) composed a work entitled *On the Buildings* around 553–554. Earlier he had composed the first seven books of his *History in Eight Books*, also known as *The Wars*, a largely eyewitness account of Justinian's wars against the Persians, Vandals, and Goths, which were fought between 527 and 553. Both of these works were meant for widespread distribution and praised the emperor's actions and character in a most obsequious manner. Unknown to Justinian and the imperial censors, Procopius also wrote, probably in the year 550, a work he never intended to be seen in his own lifetime. Known today as *The Secret History*, this work purports to be a corrective to the laudatory *Wars*, the inside story of court life and policy-making, and a true description of the characters of the emperor and his empress, Theodora.

Our two excerpts come respectively from the *Buildings* and the slightly earlier *Secret History*. Together they illustrate how and why Justinian the Great was and still is such a controversial ruler and individual.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. According to *On the Buildings*, what were Justinian's greatest accomplishments?
2. According to *The Secret History*, what specific evils was Justinian guilty of?
3. Consider Justinian's supposed character flaws and vices. How would a partisan of Justinian interpret those qualities?
4. How useful does *The Secret History* appear to be as a source? What about *On the Buildings*? Please be specific in your answer.

5. Assume the *Barberini Ivory* (Chapter 7, source 52) represents Justinian (as it probably does). Compose Procopius's commentary on it — first in the spirit of *On the Buildings* and then in the spirit of *The Secret History*.

ON THE BUILDINGS

In our time Justinian became emperor. He took over the state when it was tottering dangerously. He increased its size and made it far more glorious by driving from it the barbarians who had violated it from ancient times, as I have described in detail in my work on the wars. . . . Justinian did not refuse to acquire other states as well. At any rate, he won over many which in his time were already foreign to the Roman Empire, and he built innumerable new cities. And finding doctrine about God before his time wavering and being forced into many directions, he checked all the pathways leading to error and caused the faith to stand on one secure foundation. Besides this, he found that the laws were obscure because they had been multiplied unnecessarily and were in confusion because of their obvious contradiction. So he purified them of the mass of quibbles, and by greatly strengthening them, preserved them from contradiction.¹ By using his own initiative to remove possible causes of conspiracy and by satisfying those in need of a livelihood with gifts of money and by forcibly removing the fate which threatened them, he brought the state to blessedness. Further, he strengthened the Roman Empire, which was subject everywhere to barbarians, with large numbers of soldiers and fortified all its furthest points by building strongholds. As for the rest, most of it has been recorded in my other works: The good that was done by his building shall be my present subject. . . .

As I have just said, he more than doubled the

state in area and increased its power in other ways: And those who plotted against him, even to the extent of wanting his death, have not only lived to this day in the enjoyment of their property, even though they were openly caught, but actually still serve as Roman generals and enjoy the rank of consuls.² But now, as I said, I must go on to the buildings of this emperor, so that it may not come about that those who look upon them in the future may fail to believe because of their number and size that they are the work of one man. For many achievements of our ancestors are discredited because of their outstanding merits, if they have not been recorded in writing. The buildings in Byzantium will naturally be the foundation of the record. For the beginning of a task, according to the old saying, we must "put on a shining face."

At one period some of the common people and the dregs of the mob rose against the Emperor Justinian in Byzantium and caused the so-called Nika Revolt,³ as I have described in detail without hiding anything in my work on the wars. Showing that they had taken up arms, not only against the emperor, but just as much against God in their wickedness, they dared to burn the Christian church (the Byzantines call this temple Wisdom,⁴ thinking this name most appropriate to God), and God allowed them to accomplish this impiety in the foreknowledge of the beauty which this shrine was destined to attain when restored. So the whole church was burned down and lay in ruins. Not long after, the Emperor Justinian rounded it off so beautifully that if anyone had asked the Christians earlier whether

¹Justinian's *Corpus Iuris Civilis* (Body of Civil Law), which codified and clarified imperial Roman law.

²Consuls were originally the two annually elected chief magistrates of the Roman Republic. In the age of the Empire, the rank became honorific.

³January 532. The riot received its name from the fact that

the rioters cried out "*Nika*" (Win!), the traditional chant of the crowds at the chariot races in the Hippodrome, where the riot began and ended. See note 34 for further information.

⁴Hagia Sophia.

they wanted the church to be destroyed and rebuilt like this, and had shown them the outlines of what can now be seen, I think they would have immediately prayed to see the church in ruins so that it could be changed into its present form. In the event, the Emperor proceeded with all haste to the building, with no heed to expense, and collected all the craftsmen from all over the world. . . . This, too, was a sign of the honor in which God held the Emperor, in that he procured in advance those who would be best to help him in his undertakings. One might reasonably admire the Emperor's own good sense also, in that he was able to select from all men those best adapted for the most serious tasks. . . .

And whenever anyone enters this church to pray, he perceives at once that this edifice has been so finely crafted not by any human power or skill but by the agency of God. Therefore his mind is lifted up toward God and exalted.

THE SECRET HISTORY

Deceptive Affability and Piety of a Tyrant

Justinian, while otherwise of such character as I have shown, did make himself easy of access and affable to his visitors; nobody of all those who sought audience with him was ever denied: even those who confronted him improperly or noisily never made him angry. On the other hand, he never blushed at the murders he committed. Thus he never revealed a sign of wrath or irritation at any offender, but with a gentle countenance and unruffled brow gave the order to destroy myriads of innocent men, to sack cities, to confiscate any amount of properties.

One would think from this manner that the man had the mind of a lamb. If, however, anyone tried to propitiate him and in supplication beg him to forgive his victims, he would grin like a wild beast, and woe betide those who saw his teeth thus bared!

The priests he permitted fearlessly to outrage their neighbors, and even took sympathetic pleasure in their robberies, fancying he was thus sharing their divine piety. When he judged such cases, he thought he was doing the holy thing when he gave the decision to the priest and let him go free with his ill-gotten booty: justice, in his mind, meant the priests' getting the better of their opponents. When he himself thus illegally got possession of estates of people alive or dead, he would straightway make them over to one of the churches, gilding his violence with the color of piety — and so that his victims could not possibly get their property back. Furthermore he committed an inconceivable number of murders for the same cause: for in his zeal to gather all men into one Christian doctrine, he recklessly killed all who dissented, and this too he did in the name of piety.⁵ For he did not call it homicide, when those who perished happened to be of a belief that was different from his own. . . .

He was untiring; and hardly slept at all, generally speaking; he had no appetite for food or drink, but picking up a morsel with the tips of his fingers, tasted it and left the table, as if eating were a duty imposed upon him by nature and of no more interest than a courier takes in delivering a letter. Indeed, he would often go without food for two days and nights, especially when the time before the festival called Easter enjoins such fasting. Then, as I have said, he often went without food for two days, living only on a little water and a few wild herbs, sleeping perhaps a single hour, and then spending the rest of the time walking up and down.

If, mark you, he had spent these periods in good works, matters might have been considerably alleviated. Instead, he devoted the full strength of his nature to the ruin of the Romans, and succeeded in razing the state to its foundation. For his constant wakefulness, his privations and his labors were undergone for no other reason

⁵Review *The Theodosian Code's* proscriptions against heretics (Chapter 7, source 51).

than to contrive each day ever more exaggerated calamities for his people. For he was, as I said, unusually keen at inventing and quick at accomplishing unholy acts, so that even the good in him transpired to be answerable for the downfall of his subjects. . . .

How Justinian Killed a Trillion People

That Justinian was not a man, but a demon, as I have said, in human form,⁶ one might prove by considering the enormity of the evils he brought upon mankind. For in the monstrousness of his actions the power of a fiend is manifest. Certainly an accurate reckoning of all those whom he destroyed would be impossible, I think, for anyone but God to make. Sooner could one number, I fancy, the sands of the sea than the men this emperor murdered. Examining the countries that he made desolate of inhabitants, I would say he slew a trillion people. For Libya,⁷ vast as it is, he so devastated that you would have to go a long way to find a single man, and he would be remarkable. Yet eighty thousand Vandals⁸ capable of bearing arms had dwelt there, and as for their wives and children and servants, who could guess their number? Yet still more numerous than these was the Mauretanians,⁹ who with their wives and children were all exterminated. And again, many Roman soldiers and those who followed them to Constantinople, the earth now covers; so that if one should venture to say that five million men perished in Libya alone, he would not, I imagine, be telling the half of it.

The reason for this was that after the Vandals were defeated,¹⁰ Justinian planned, not how he might best strengthen his hold on the country, nor how by safe-guarding the interests of those who were loyal to him he might have the goodwill of his subjects: but instead he foolishly recalled Belisarius¹¹ at once, on the charge that the latter intended to make himself king (an idea of which Belisarius was utterly incapable),¹² and so that he might manage affairs there himself and be able to plunder the whole of Libya. Sending commissioners to value the province, he imposed grievous taxes where before there had been none. Whatever lands were most valuable, he seized, and prohibited the Arians¹³ from observing their religious ceremonies. Negligent toward sending necessary supplies to the soldiers, he was over-strict with them in other ways; wherefore mutinies arose resulting in the deaths of many. For he was never able to abide by established customs, but naturally threw everything into confusion and disturbance.

Italy, which is not less than thrice as large as Libya,¹⁴ was everywhere desolated of men, even worse than the other country,¹⁵ and from this the count of those who perished there may be imagined. The reason for what happened in Italy I have already made plain.¹⁶ All of his crimes in Libya were repeated here; sending his auditors to Italy, he soon upset and ruined everything.

The rule of the Goths, before this war, had extended from the land of the Gauls to the boundaries of Dacia.¹⁷ . . . The Germans held Cisalpine Gaul¹⁸ and most of the land of the Ve-

⁶Procopius did not mean this in a metaphorical sense. Demons in human form were a major motif in Christian literature.

⁷Western North Africa.

⁸A Germanic people who had occupied the western regions of North Africa.

⁹The people of western North Africa.

¹⁰This war lasted from 533 to 534.

¹¹Constantinople's best general, Belisarius (ca. 505–565) had suppressed the Nika riot, conquered North Africa, and captured Rome in 536.

¹²Procopius had served as Belisarius's secretary and was quite loyal to the man. Apparently, he is correct. Despite contrary rumors, Belisarius was totally loyal to Justinian.

¹³The Vandals belonged to the *Arian* branch of Christian-

ity. Named after Arius, a priest of Alexandria, this sect believed Jesus was God only by divine adoption and was not coeternal with God the Father. This belief had been declared heretical in 325 at the Council of Nicaea, which had been summoned by Constantine I.

¹⁴Hardly.

¹⁵The Italian, or Gothic, War began in 536 and dragged on to 561.

¹⁶In his earlier history of the Gothic War.

¹⁷From eastern Gaul (today southeastern France, western Switzerland, and western Germany) to the region that is today Romania (Dacia).

¹⁸Literally, "Gaul this side of the Alps." This refers to Italy north of the Po River, especially northwestern Italy, which ancient Celtic tribes had inhabited.

netians,¹⁹ when the Roman army arrived in Italy. Sirmium and the neighboring country was in the hands of the Gepidae.²⁰ All of these he utterly depopulated. For those who did not die in battle perished of disease and famine, which as usual followed in the train of war. Illyria²¹ and all of Thrace,²² that is, from the Ionian Gulf²³ to the suburbs of Constantinople, including Greece and the Chersonese,²⁴ were overrun by the Huns,²⁵ Slavs²⁶ and Antes,²⁷ almost every year, from the time when Justinian took over the Roman Empire; and intolerable things they did to the inhabitants. For in each of these incursions, I should say, more than two hundred thousand Romans were slain or enslaved, so that all this country became a desert like that of Scythia.²⁸

Such were the results of the wars in Libya and in Europe. Meanwhile the Saracens²⁹ were continuously making inroads on the Romans of the East, from the land of Egypt to the boundaries of Persia; and so completely did their work, that in all this country few were left, and it will never be possible, I fear, to find out how many thus perished. Also the Persians under Chosroes³⁰ three times invaded the rest of this Roman territory, sacked the cities, and either killing or carrying away the men they captured in the cities and country, emptied the land of inhabitants every time they invaded it. . . .

For neither the Persians nor the Saracens, the Huns or the Slavs or the rest of the barbarians, were able to withdraw from Roman territory undamaged. In their inroads, and still more in their

sieges of cities and in battles, where they prevailed over opposing forces, they shared in disastrous losses quite as much. Not only the Romans, but nearly all the barbarians thus felt Justinian's bloodthirstiness. For while Chosroes himself was bad enough, as I have duly shown elsewhere, Justinian was the one who each time gave him an occasion for the war. For he took no heed to fit his policies to an appropriate time, but did everything at the wrong moment: in time of peace or truce he ever craftily contrived to find pretext for war with his neighbors; while in time of war, he unreasonably lost interest, and hesitated too long in preparing for the campaign, grudging the necessary expenses; and instead of putting his mind on the war, gave his attention to stargazing and research as to the nature of God.³¹ Yet he would not abandon hostilities, since he was so bloodthirsty and tyrannical, even when thus unable to conquer the enemy because of his negligence in meeting the situation.

So while he was emperor, the whole earth ran red with the blood of nearly all the Romans and the barbarians. Such were the results of the wars throughout the whole empire during this time. But the civil strife in Constantinople and in every other city, if the dead were reckoned, would total no smaller number of slain than those who perished in the wars, I believe. Since justice and impartial punishment were seldom directed against offenders, and each of the two factions³² tried to win the favor of the emperor over the other, neither party kept the peace. Each, accord-

¹⁹Northeastern Italy.

²⁰A Gothic people.

²¹The western, or Adriatic, shore of the Balkans.

²²The eastern, or Black Sea, region of the Balkans.

²³The Mediterranean region between southern Italy and Greece.

²⁴A narrow peninsula in Thrace that extends along the European side of the Dardanelles, the strait that separates modern European Turkey from Asiatic Turkey.

²⁵The so-called Cotrigur Huns and also the Avars, both of whom were Turkic horsepeople out of the steppes of Central Asia.

²⁶Various Slavic-speaking pagan peoples who were moving into the northern Balkans.

²⁷A conglomeration of people, possibly Indo-Iranians or Slavs, from north of the Black Sea. Justinian made them allies in 545; they disappear from history after 602.

²⁸The desolate steppes of Central Asia.

²⁹Arabs.

³⁰Chosroes I (r. 531–578/579), king of kings of the Sassanian Empire of Persia, which encompassed Mesopotamia and Iran. He inherited a war with Justinian which had been raging since 527. In 532 he and Justinian negotiated an Eternal Peace. Chosroes broke this peace in 540 when he invaded Byzantine Mesopotamia and Syria. In 561 both exhausted parties concluded a fifty-year truce.

³¹Justinian was avidly interested in subtle points of theology and believed himself to be a theologian.

³²The two major circus factions — the Blues and the Greens. They were much more than just fans of chariot-racing teams. Their rivalries and, at times, mutual frustrations often resulted in mob violence.

ing to his smile or his frown, was now terrified, now encouraged. Sometimes they attacked each other in full strength, sometimes in smaller groups, or even lay in ambush against the first single man of the opposite party who came along. For thirty-two years, without ever ceasing, they performed outrages against each other, many of them being punished with death by the municipal prefect.³³

However, punishment for these offenses was mostly directed against the Greens.³⁴

Furthermore the persecution of the Samaritans³⁵ and the so-called heretics filled the Roman realm with blood. Let this present recapitulation suffice to recall what I have described more fully a little while since. Such were the things done to all mankind by the demon in flesh for which Justinian, as emperor, was responsible. But what evils he wrought against men by some hidden power and diabolic force I shall now relate.

During his rule over the Romans, many disasters of various kinds occurred: which some said were due to the presence and artifices of the Devil, and others considered were effected by the Divinity, Who, disgusted with the Roman Em-

pire, had turned away from it and given the country up to the Old One.³⁶ The Scirtus River flooded Edessa,³⁷ creating countless sufferings among the inhabitants, as I have elsewhere written. The Nile, rising as usual, but not subsiding in the customary season, brought terrible calamities to the people there, as I have also previously recounted. . . .

Earthquakes destroyed Antioch,³⁸ the leading city of the East; Seleucia, which is situated nearby; and Anazarbus, most renowned city in Cilicia. Who could number those that perished in these metropolises? Yet one must add also those who lived in Ibora; in Amasea, the chief city of Pontus; in Polybotus in Phrygia, called Polymede by the Pisidians; in Lychnidus in Epirus; and in Corinth: all thickly inhabited cities from of old. All of these were destroyed by earthquakes during this time, with a loss of almost all their inhabitants.³⁹ And then came the plague, which I have previously mentioned, killing half at least of those who had survived the earthquakes.⁴⁰ To so many men came their doom, when Justinian first came to direct the Roman state and later possessed the throne of autocracy.

³³Constantinople's chief municipal official.

³⁴See note 32. The Greens were especially troublesome for Justinian. They precipitated the Nika riot of 532 (note 3) when they staged a demonstration in the Hippodrome in which they complained of the arbitrary actions of imperial authorities, including the emperor.

³⁵A nonorthodox Jewish sect with settlements in Palestine, Syria, Egypt, and Constantinople, they were centered in the hills of Samaria in central Israel. Rebelling against Byzantine authority in 529, they were ruthlessly crushed.

³⁶The Devil.

³⁷A city in what is today southeast Turkey.

³⁸The chief city of Syria.

³⁹These cities were located throughout the eastern empire. Nine major earthquakes are recorded in this entire region during the period 526–557. The death toll was staggering.

⁴⁰A Mediterranean-wide pandemic of bubonic plague broke out in Egypt in 541 and reached Constantinople by May 542. Justinian himself contracted but survived the plague. Justinian's invading armies introduced the plague into Italy, where it proved quite devastating. By 600 the plague had essentially burnt itself out, but only after reducing the total population of the Mediterranean to about 60 percent or less of its preplague numbers.

Charles the Great: Europe's First Emperor

Although Byzantine cultural influences spread beyond the territorial limits of the Eastern Roman Empire, Byzantium was largely a civilization centered upon a single empire. In the West, to the contrary, a new civilization arose that was not identified with any single political entity, even though the West created its own empire in the year 800 and then recreated it in 962. Despite having its own *Holy Roman Empire*, as it was later called, European civilization was politically pluralistic and was never tied to any single state.

In many respects youthful, dynamic Europe was an everexpanding culture in the period from roughly 500 to 1500. Yet this dynamism was certainly not obvious during the early centuries in which European civilization was taking shape. With the passing of Roman imperial order, Western Europeans were thrown back on their own resources and forced to create new social and political structures and a new civilization. In fashioning this civilization, Westerners melded together three elements: the vestiges and memories of Roman civilization; the moral and organizational leadership of the Roman Catholic Church; and the vigor and culture of the various fringe peoples who carved out kingdoms in Europe from the fifth century onward. The single act that most vividly symbolizes the new order that emerged from that fusion was Pope Leo III's coronation of Charles the Great as Roman emperor on Christmas Day, 800. The following sources shed light on the person and reign of Charlemagne, a man whom the West styled *Roman emperor* but who was less and much more than that.

A Papal Portrait: Leo III and Charles the Great

84 ▼ POPE LEO III'S LATERAN MOSAIC

With the deposition of Romulus Augustulus in 476, the western half of the Roman Empire lost its last resident Roman emperor. Although the emperor at Constantinople remained, in theory, ruler of the western, as well as the eastern, regions of the Roman Empire, in reality, the West was divided into a number of Germanic kingdoms — a process that had begun well before 476. If any single entity commanded the loyalties of all or most Europeans, it was the *Roman Church*, which was centered upon the person and office of the *pope* of Rome. The pope, whose title means “father” in Latin, was bishop of the city of Rome and claimed authority over all of Christendom, not just the Western Church, by virtue of being the heir of Saint Peter. According to arguments first put forward in the fourth century, Christ had given Saint Peter, the leader of the apostles, “the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven” and, therefore, authority over the entire Church. Peter later became the first bishop of Rome, and it was as bishop of Rome that he exercised his God-given authority over Christendom. When he died in office, all his power passed to his successor, and it continued to be handed on to each successive bishop

of Rome. This vision of church history, which received a fair amount of acceptance in the West, failed to convince Christians in the East, including those who looked to Constantinople for spiritual guidance.

Although the Western Church considered the bishop of Rome to be the successor of Saint Peter and, therefore, the *holy father*, the actual power that popes exercised over Western Christendom was severely limited, especially before the twelfth century. Certainly Pope Leo III (r. 795–816), a contemporary of Charles the Great, had a vision of papal authority that far exceeded the bounds of political and even ecclesiastical reality. In point of fact, he had very little authority outside of Rome and its environs, and even in Rome he was beset by enemies, some of whom plotted his deposition and maybe even his assassination.

In search of a protector, Leo III turned to the most powerful man of the day, Charles, king of the Franks and of the Lombards, whose lands covered much of western continental Europe by the late eighth century. Protection, however, usually comes with a price, and perhaps Pope Leo had that in mind when he commissioned the mosaic that appears here.

Leo was lavish in the money he spent beautifying papal Rome, and one of his more ambitious building projects was adding two massive state reception halls to the papal residence known as the *Lateran Palace*. In the fashion of the day, the interiors of each hall were covered with mosaics. One of the mosaics pictured a seated Saint Peter flanked by two kneeling figures: Pope Leo and King Charles. Inasmuch as the mosaic was completed sometime between 798 and April 799, Charles undoubtedly saw this artistic interpretation of papal-Frankish relations on his fateful last visit to Rome in 800/801, when the pope crowned him emperor. One can only wonder what Charles thought of the mosaic.

Time badly deteriorated the mosaic, and a heavy-handed attempt at restoration in 1743 completed the process of destruction. What we see in this mid-eighteenth-century replacement copy is Saint Peter, the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven on his lap, handing a *pallium* (see source 82) to Pope Leo and a lance with attached battle standard to King Charles. The *pallium* that Leo receives is the sign of authority worn by popes and archbishops. Note that Peter, who is dressed in clerical robes, wears one. Both the pope and the king have square nimbuses, or haloes, conventional signs that they are especially sanctified or powerful people who are still living; Peter has a round nimbus, a sign of canonized sainthood. The four Latin inscriptions read, from top to bottom and left to right as we view the mosaic: “Saint Peter”; “Most Holy Lord Pope Leo”; “To Lord King Charles”; and “Blessed Peter, You Give Life to Pope Leo and You Give Victory to King Charles.”

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. Is there anything significant about Leo's position on Saint Peter's right and Charles's position on his left? Explain your answer.
2. What do you make of the fact that it is *Peter* who gives Charles the lance and not Jesus or some other manifestation of God?
3. What is the message of this mosaic?
4. Review source 82. Now compose a Byzantine commentary on the mosaic.



Lateran Palace Mosaic

A Carolingian Vision of Reality



85 ▼ *Charles the Great, A LETTER TO POPE LEO III and THE CAPITULARY ON THE MISSI*

Charlemagne ruled a major portion of continental Europe for close to half a century (768–814). During his lifetime, Charles's efforts to expand the boundaries of Christendom and impose an order based on his understanding of Christian principles won him a reputation that extended all the way to the court of Caliph Harun al-Rashid in Baghdad. His *Carolingian* (the family of Charles) successors, however, were less fortunate and probably less able. In 843 Charles's three grand-

sons divided the empire into three kingdoms, signaling continental Europe's return to political pluralism.

Before the collapse of the Carolingian Empire, however, Charlemagne established at least a sense of order and unity, if not its total reality, that served as an inspiration for many of Europe's later emperors and kings. These included the king of Germany, Otto I, who laid the basis for the Germanic *Holy Roman Empire* with his imperial coronation in 962, and Napoleon, who in the early nineteenth century attempted to create a pan-European empire centered on France.

The following two sources, both of which were composed in Charlemagne's name by his counselors and secretaries, illustrate the ideals of Charles's court and the realities that faced it. The first document is a letter to Pope Leo III written in 796, shortly after King Charles received word of the pope's accession to the papal throne — some four years before Charles's imperial coronation. The second is a *capitulary*, so called because it consists of a number of regulatory chapters (*capitula* in Latin), which Emperor Charles issued in 802. Known as the *Capitulary on the Missi*, it established regulations regarding the *missi dominici* (the sovereign's envoys) whom Charles sent throughout his empire. These *missi* were not career officials. Rather they were high-ranking churchmen and lay lords who exercised special commissions. Working in pairs of one layman and one churchman, they traveled into an assigned region far from their home base and examined its state of affairs, correcting whatever irregularities they could and reporting everything directly to the emperor.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. Consider Charles's letter to Pope Leo III. What role(s) does Charles claim for himself? What role(s) does he assign the pope?
2. Consider the oath expected of all freemen (chapters 2–9 of the *Capitulary on the Missi*). What does it suggest about the nature and extent of Charles's government?
3. Consider articles 10, 11, 14, 19, and 40 of the *Capitulary on the Missi*. What do these chapters allow us to infer about Charles's view of the imperial Church and its clerics?
4. After a careful reading of both documents, what do you infer was Charles's vision of his duties as king and emperor?
5. The introduction to this chapter mentions special tensions that were built into the fabric of European civilization. Do sources 84 and 85 provide evidence of any of those tensions? Explain. Be specific in your answer.
6. Compose Charles's commentary on Pope Leo III's *Lateran Mosaic*.

A LETTER TO POPE LEO III

Charles, by the grace of God king of the Franks¹ and Lombards,² and patrician of the Romans,³ to his holiness, Pope Leo, greeting. . . . Just as I entered into an agreement with the most holy father, your predecessor,⁴ so also I desire to make with you an inviolable treaty of mutual fidelity and love; that, on the one hand, you shall pray for me and give me the apostolic benediction,⁵ and that, on the other, with the aid of God I will ever defend the most holy seat⁶ of the holy Roman Church. For it is our part to defend the holy Church of Christ from the attacks of pagans and infidels⁷ from without, and within to enforce the acceptance of the Catholic faith. It is your part, most holy father, to aid us in the good fight by raising your hands to God as Moses did,⁸ so that by your intercession the Christian people under the leadership of God may always and everywhere have the victory over the enemies of His holy name, and the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified throughout the world. Abide by the canonical law⁹ in all things and obey the precepts of the Holy Fathers always, that your life may be an example of sanctity to all, and your holy admonitions be observed by the whole world, and that your light may so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your father who is in Heaven.¹⁰ May omnipotent God preserve your holiness unharmed through many years for the exalting of His holy Church.

¹In 768 Charles and his brother Carloman had divided the kingdom of the Franks between them upon the death of their father, King Pepin. When Carloman died in 771, Charles seized his deceased brother's half of the kingdom.

²In 774 Charles seized control of the Lombard Kingdom in northern and central Italy.

³A title bestowed on King Pepin and his sons Charles and Carloman by Pope Stephen II in 754.

⁴Pope Hadrian I (r. 772–795).

⁵The blessing of the pope, the *apostolic* successor of Saint Peter, Prince of the Apostles, whom each pope claims as his predecessor and the source of papal authority.

⁶The *see*, or church, where the pope resides — this is a metaphor for the papacy itself.

THE CAPITULARY ON THE *Missi*

1. Concerning the embassy sent out by the lord emperor.

Therefore, the most serene and most Christian lord emperor Charles has chosen from his nobles the wisest and most prudent men, both archbishops and some of the other bishops also, and venerable abbots¹¹ and pious laymen, and has sent them throughout his whole kingdom, and through them he would have all the various classes of persons mentioned in the following chapters live in accordance with the correct law. Moreover, where anything which is not right and just has been enacted in the law, he has ordered them to inquire into this most diligently and to inform him of it. He desires, God granting, to reform it. And let no one, through his cleverness or craft, dare to oppose or thwart the written law, as many are wont to do, or the judicial sentence passed upon him, or to do injury to the churches of God, or the poor, or the widows, or the wards, or any Christian. But all shall live entirely in accordance with God's precept, honestly and under a just rule, and each one shall be admonished to live in harmony with his fellows in his business or profession; the canonical clergy¹² ought to observe in every respect a canonical life without heeding base gain; nuns¹³ ought to keep diligent watch over their lives; laymen and the secular clergy¹⁴ ought rightly to observe their laws without malicious fraud; and all ought to live in mutual charity and perfect peace.

⁷The unfaithful who do not believe in the teachings of the Church.

⁸The Bible, Exodus, 17:11.

⁹*Canon law* is the law of the Church; the word *canon* means "standard of measurement" in Greek.

¹⁰The Bible, Gospel of Matthew, 5:16.

¹¹Heads of monasteries.

¹²Monks who live according to a special rule, or set of canons (see note 9).

¹³Women who live in monasteries — female counterparts to monks.

¹⁴Nonmonastic clerics, such as local priests and the bishops and archbishops who governed them, who lived in and ministered to the needs of the world.

And let the *missi* themselves make a diligent investigation whenever any man claims that an injustice has been done him by any one, just as they desire to deserve the grace of omnipotent God and to keep their fidelity promised to Him, so that in all cases, in accordance with the will and fear of God, they shall administer the law fully and justly in the case of the holy churches of God and of the poor, of wards and widows, and of the whole people. And if there be anything of such a nature that they, together with the provincial counts,¹⁵ are not able of themselves to correct it and to do justice concerning it, they shall, without any reservation, refer it, together with their reports, to the judgment of the emperor; and the straight path of justice shall not be impeded by any one on account of flattery or gifts, or on account of any relationship, or from fear of the powerful.

2. Concerning the fidelity to be promised to the lord emperor.

He has commanded that every man in his whole kingdom, whether ecclesiastic or layman, and each one according to his vow and occupation, should now promise to him as emperor the fidelity which he had previously promised to him as king; and all of those who had not yet made that promise should do likewise, down to those who were twelve years old. And that it shall be announced to all in public, so that each one might know, how great and how many things are comprehended in that oath; not merely, as many have thought hitherto, fidelity to the lord emperor as regards his life, and not introducing any enemy into his kingdom out of enmity, and not consenting to or concealing another's faithlessness to him; but that all may know that this oath contains in itself the following meaning:

3. First, that each one voluntarily shall strive, in accordance with his knowledge and ability, to

live completely in the holy service of God, in accordance with the precept of God and in accordance with his own promise, because the lord emperor is unable to give to all individually the necessary care and discipline. . . .

5. That no one shall presume to rob or do any injury fraudulently to the churches of God, or widows, or orphans, or pilgrims, for the lord emperor himself, under God and His saints, has constituted himself their protector and defender.

6. That no one shall dare to lay waste a benefice¹⁶ of the lord emperor, or to make it his own property.

7. That no one shall presume to neglect a summons to war from the lord emperor; and that no one of the counts shall be so presumptuous as to dare to excuse any one of those who owe military service, either on account of relationship, or flattery, or gifts from any one.

8. That no one shall presume to impede at all in any way a ban¹⁷ or command of the lord emperor, or to tamper with his work, or to impede, or to lessen, or in any way to act contrary to his will or commands. And that no one shall dare to neglect to pay his dues or tax.

9. That no one, for any reason, shall make a practice in court of defending another unjustly, either from any desire of gain when the cause is weak, or by impeding a just judgment by his skill in reasoning, or by a desire of oppressing when the cause is weak. But each one shall answer for his own cause or tax or debt, unless someone is infirm or ignorant of pleading. . . . But in every case it shall be done in accordance with justice and the law; and no one shall have the power to impede justice by a gift, reward, or any kind of evil flattery, or from any hindrance of relationship. And no one shall unjustly consent to another in anything, but with all zeal and good-will all shall be prepared to carry out justice.

¹⁵Local nobles who governed a *county*, or administrative region, in the emperor's name. Charles's empire contained roughly three hundred counties.

¹⁶Land and other sources of revenue that the emperor had

given out to a relative, friend, or dependent. The person enjoyed the income from the *benefice*, but Charles retained legal ownership.

¹⁷A judicial fine or other sentence.

For all the above mentioned ought to be observed by the imperial oath.

10. [We ordain] that bishops and priests shall live according to the canons and shall teach others to do the same.

11. That bishops, abbots, and abbesses¹⁸ who are in charge of others, with the greatest veneration shall strive to surpass their subjects in this diligence and shall not oppress their subjects with a harsh rule or tyranny, but with a sincere love shall carefully guard the flock committed to them with mercy and charity, or by the examples of good works. . . .

14. That bishops, abbots and abbesses, and counts shall be mutually in accord, following the law in order to render a just judgment with all charity and unity of peace, and that they shall live faithfully in accordance with the will of God, so that always everywhere through them and among them a just judgment shall be rendered. The poor, widows, orphans, and pilgrims shall have consolation and defense from them; so that we, through the good-will of these, may deserve the reward of eternal life rather than punishment. . . .

19. That no bishops, abbots, priests, deacons,¹⁹ or other members of the clergy shall presume to have dogs for hunting, or hawks, falcons, and sparrow-hawks, but each shall observe fully the canons or rule of his order. If any one shall presume to do so, let him know that he shall lose his office. And in addition he shall suffer such punishment for his misconduct that the others will be afraid to possess such things for themselves. . . .

27. And we command that no one in our whole kingdom shall dare to deny hospitality to rich, or poor, or pilgrims; that is, let no one deny shelter and fire and water to pilgrims traversing our country in God's name, or to any one traveling

for the love of God, or for the safety of his own soul.

28. Concerning embassies coming from the lord emperor. That the counts and *centenarii*²⁰ shall provide most carefully, as they desire the good-will of the lord emperor, for the *missi* who are sent out, so that they may go through their territories without any delay; and the emperor commands all everywhere that they see to it that no delay is encountered anywhere, but they shall cause the *missi* to go on their way in all haste and shall provide for them in such a manner as they may direct. . . .

32. Murders, by which a multitude of the Christian people perish, we command in every way to be shunned and to be forbidden. . . . Nevertheless, lest sin should also increase, in order that the greatest enmities may not arise among Christians, when by the persuasions of the Devil murders happen, the criminal shall immediately hasten to make amends and with all speed shall pay to the relatives of the murdered man the fitting composition for the evil done.²¹ And we forbid firmly that the relatives of the murdered man shall dare in any way to continue their enmities on account of the evil done, or shall refuse to grant peace to him who asks it, but, having given their pledges, they shall receive the fitting composition and shall make a perpetual peace; moreover, the guilty one shall not delay to pay the composition. . . . But if any one shall have scorned to make the fitting composition, he shall be deprived of his property until we shall render our decision. . . .

40. Lastly, therefore, we desire all our decrees to be known in the whole kingdom through our *missi* now sent out, either among the men of the Church, bishops, abbots, priests, deacons, canons, all monks or nuns, so that each one in his ministry or profession may keep our ban or de-

¹⁸The female head of a monastery of nuns (see note 13).

¹⁹Special assistants to a bishop, *deacons* ranked just below priests in the clerical hierarchy.

²⁰The *centenarii*, or "hundred leaders," were minor local officials, who were subject to the authority of the district

count (see note 15). Each county was divided into a number of hundreds.

²¹Following ancient Germanic tradition, most crimes, even homicide, could be expiated by paying a fine to the victim (or the victim's family) and the king.

cree, or where it may be fitting to thank the people for their good-will, or to furnish aid, or where there may be need still of correcting anything. . . . Where we believe there is anything

unpunished, we shall so strive to correct it with all our zeal and will that with God's aid we may bring it to correction, both for our own eternal glory and that of all our faithful.

Constantinople and Rome: Beacons of Christianity

During the ninth and tenth centuries Christendom's two major centers of civilization, Byzantium and Western Europe, were quite active in spreading the faith to their pagan neighbors. Indeed, certain areas of Eastern Europe, especially the Balkans, became places of both cooperation between Byzantine and Western missionaries and of competition.

Spreading the faith among the pagans who lived along their borders was a direct response to the command that Jesus had given his apostles and which Christians had taken quite seriously for close to a millennium: "Go, make followers of all peoples . . . and teach them to observe all the commands that I gave you" (Gospel of Matthew, 28:19). But it also served political ends by creating, at least in theory, dependent, or at least friendly, states along their borders.

Neither of the historical examples contained in the two sources that follow concerns missionary activity in the hotly contested Balkans, where the Croats accepted Roman Catholic Christianity, and such diverse peoples as the Bulgars and Serbs received their Christianity from Constantinople. But the experiences of the Rus' and the Hungarians, as mirrored in these sources, were paralleled many times over in the Balkans, in central Eastern Europe, in the Baltic, and throughout Scandinavia.

Bringing Christianity to the Rus'

86 ▼ THE RUSSIAN PRIMARY CHRONICLE

Under the leadership of its emperors, the Byzantine Empire defended itself against a number of pagan enemies on its northern and western frontiers, eventually converting many of them to Eastern Orthodox Christianity. The most notable example of Constantinople's successful blending of imperial foreign policy with Christian missionary fervor was its conversion, beginning in the late tenth century, of the *Rus' of Kiev*, a people of mixed Scandinavian and Slavic origins. The leader who took the fateful step that resulted in the rather rapid Christianization of the Rus' was Prince Vladimir I of Kiev (r. 978–1015). For his successful efforts in converting his people to Orthodox Christianity, Vladimir is venerated as a saint in the Russian Orthodox Church.

The following account, which blends fact and fiction into a charming pastiche, presents Vladimir's conversion from a Kievan perspective. Compiled by a single monastic author around 1113 from earlier written sources and oral traditions, *The Russian Primary Chronicle* is the single most important source for the history of the state of Kiev from the mid ninth to the early twelfth century.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. The tale of Prince Vladimir's study of various religions might not be literally true, but what deeper truth does it reveal about why Byzantine Christianity was so attractive to the Rus' and other pagans on the empire's frontiers?
2. What did Vladimir gain from his conversion?
3. What did the Byzantine Empire gain from Vladimir's conversion?
4. This account was composed by a Kievan monk in the early twelfth century. Judging from the tone of the chronicle, how deeply had Byzantine Christianity penetrated Kievan culture in a little over a century?

6495 (987).¹ Vladimir summoned together his boyars² and the city-elders, and said to them, "Behold, the Bulgars³ came before me urging me to accept their religion. Then came the Germans and praised their own faith;⁴ and after them came the Jews.⁵ Finally the Greeks⁶ appeared, criticizing all other faiths but commending their own, and they spoke at length, telling the history of the whole world from its beginning. Their words were artful, and it was wondrous to listen and pleasant to hear them. They preach the existence of another world. 'Whoever adopts our religion and then dies shall arise and live forever. But whosoever embraces another faith, shall be consumed with fire in the next world.' What

is your opinion on this subject, and what do you answer?" The boyars and the elders replied, "You know, oh Prince, that no man condemns his own possessions, but praises them instead. If you desire to make certain, you have servants at your disposal. Send them to inquire about the ritual of each and how he worships God."

Their counsel pleased the prince and all the people, so that they chose good and wise men to the number of ten, and directed them to go first among the Bulgars and inspect their faith. The emissaries went their way, and when they arrived at their destination they beheld the disgraceful actions of the Bulgars and their worship in the mosque;⁷ then they returned to their country.

¹By Byzantine reckoning, the world was created in 5508 B.C.E. Consequently, the year 987 C.E. was the 6,495th year since Creation.

²Rus' nobles.

³The Bulgars of the Volga, a Turkic people who had inhabited the upper Volga since about the fifth century C.E. Vladimir had spread Rus' power all the way to the valley of the Volga. See note 7.

⁴Both the Roman papacy and the Western emperors, who also happened to be the kings of Germany, were actively attempting to convert the Rus' of Kiev and Novgorod to Roman Catholic Christianity at this time.

⁵These Jews were the *Khazars*, a Turkic people who inhab-

ited the region between the Black and Caspian seas. The Khazars embraced Judaism toward the middle of the eighth century, possibly under the influence of Jewish refugees from Persia.

⁶The Byzantines. To outsiders, such as the Rus' and Western Europeans, all Byzantines were *Greeks*, and Byzantium was *Greece*, even though the heart of the empire lay in Asiatic Anatolia. The reason for this was simple: Byzantines spoke Greek and continued the cultural traditions of Eastern Hellenism.

⁷An Islamic place of communal worship. Unlike the Bulgars of the Balkans, who had accepted Eastern Orthodox Christianity, the Volga Bulgars were Muslims.

Vladimir then instructed them to go likewise among the Germans, and examine their faith, and finally to visit the Greeks. They thus went into Germany, and after viewing the German ceremonial, they proceeded to Tsar'grad,⁸ where they appeared before the emperor.⁹ He inquired on what mission they had come, and they reported to him all that had occurred. When the emperor heard their words, he rejoiced, and did them great honor on that very day.

On the morrow, the emperor sent a message to the patriarch¹⁰ to inform him that a Russian delegation had arrived to examine the Greek faith, and directed him to prepare the church and the clergy, and to array himself in his sacerdotal robes, so that the Rus' might behold the glory of the God of the Greeks. When the patriarch received these commands, he bade the clergy assemble, and they performed the customary rites. They burned incense, and the choirs sang hymns. The emperor accompanied the Rus' to the church, and placed them in a wide space, calling their attention to the beauty of the edifice, the chanting, and the pontifical services and the ministry of the deacons, while he explained to them the worship of his God. The Rus' were astonished, and in their wonder praised the Greek ceremonial. Then the Emperors Basil and Constantine¹¹ invited the envoys to their presence, and said, "Go hence to your native country," and dismissed them with valuable presents and great honor.

Thus they returned to their own country, and the prince called together his boyars and the elders. Vladimir then announced the return of the envoys who had been sent out, and suggested

that their report be heard. He thus commanded them to speak out before his retinue. The envoys reported, "When we journeyed among the Bulgars, we beheld how they worship in their temple, called a mosque, while they stand ungirt. The Bulgar bows, sits down, looks hither and thither like one possessed, and there is no happiness among them, but instead only sorrow and a dreadful stench. Their religion is not good. Then we went among the Germans, and saw them performing many ceremonies in their temples; but we beheld no glory there. Then we went to Greece, and the Greeks led us to the edifices where they worship their God, and we knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth. For on earth there is no such splendor or such beauty, and we are at a loss how to describe it. We only know that God dwells there among men, and their service is fairer than the ceremonies of other nations. For we cannot forget that beauty. Every man, after tasting something sweet, is afterward unwilling to accept that which is bitter, and therefore we cannot dwell longer here." Then the boyars spoke and said, "If the Greek faith were evil, it would not have been adopted by your grandmother Olga¹² who was wiser than all other men." Vladimir then inquired where they should all accept baptism, and they replied that the decision rested with him.

After a year had passed, in 6496 (988), Vladimir proceeded with an armed force against Kher-son, a Greek city,¹³ and the people of Kherson barricaded themselves therein. Vladimir halted at the farther side of the city beside the harbor, a bowshot from the town, and the inhabitants resisted energetically while Vladimir besieged the

⁸*The Imperial City* — the Russian term for Constantinople.

⁹Basil II (r. 976–1025). During his reign Byzantium reached its political, military, and cultural apogee.

¹⁰The patriarch of Constantinople, at this moment Nicholas II (r. 979–991), was the chief bishop of the Byzantine Church. He was usually an imperial appointee, and his authority should not be equated with that of the pope of Rome.

¹¹The future Emperor Constantine VIII (r. 1025–1028), Basil II's brother and successor.

¹²Olga, widow of Prince Igor and regent of Kiev from 945

to 964, accepted Christian baptism, apparently several years before she traveled to Constantinople in 957. Her conversion and her ties with Byzantium laid the foundation for her grandson's work in introducing Christianity to the Rus'. The Russian Orthodox Church venerates her as Saint Olga.
¹³Kherson was a Byzantine city located in the Crimea, the peninsula that juts into the northern regions of the Black Sea and the object of fierce competition between the Kievans and the Byzantines.

town. Eventually, however, they became exhausted, and Vladimir warned them that if they did not surrender, he would remain on the spot for three years. When they failed to heed this threat, Vladimir marshalled his troops and ordered the construction of an earthwork in the direction of the city. While this work was under construction, the inhabitants dug a tunnel under the city-wall, stole the heaped-up earth, and carried it into the city, where they piled it up in the center of the town. But the soldiers kept on building, and Vladimir persisted. Then a man of Kherson, Anastasius by name, shot into the Rus' camp an arrow on which he had written, "There are springs behind you to the east, from which water flows in pipes. Dig down and cut them off." When Vladimir received this information, he raised his eyes to heaven and vowed that if this hope was realized, he would be baptized. He gave orders straightway to dig down above the pipes, and the water-supply was thus cut off. The inhabitants were accordingly overcome by thirst, and surrendered.

Vladimir and his retinue entered the city and he sent messages to the Emperors Basil and Constantine, saying, "Behold, I have captured your glorious city. I have also heard that you have an unwedded sister. Unless you give her to me to wife, I shall deal with your own city as I have with Kherson." When the emperors heard this message they were troubled, and replied, "It is not proper for Christians to give in marriage to pagans. If you are baptized, you shall have her to wife, inherit the kingdom of God, and be our companion in the faith. Unless you do so, however, we cannot give you our sister in marriage." When Vladimir learned their response, he directed the envoys of the emperors to report to the latter that he was willing to accept baptism, having already given some study to their religion, and that the Greek faith and ritual, as described by the emissaries sent to examine it, had pleased him well. When the emperors heard this

report, they rejoiced, and persuaded their sister Anna to consent to the match. They then requested Vladimir to submit to baptism before they should send their sister to him, but Vladimir desired that the princess should herself bring priests to baptize him. The emperors complied with his request, and sent forth their sister, accompanied by some dignitaries and priests. Anna, however, departed with reluctance. "It is as if I were setting out into captivity," she lamented; "better were it for me to die at home." But her brothers protested, "Through your agency God turns the land of Rus' to repentance, and you will relieve Greece from the danger of grievous war. Do you not see how much harm the Rus' have already brought upon the Greeks? If you do not set out, they may bring on us the same misfortunes." It was thus that they overcame her hesitation only with great difficulty. The princess embarked upon a ship, and after tearfully embracing her kinfolk, she set forth across the sea and arrived at Kherson. The natives came forth to greet her, and conducted her into the city, where they settled her in the palace.

By divine agency, Vladimir was suffering at that moment from a disease of the eyes, and could see nothing, being in great distress. The princess declared to him that if he desired to be relieved of this disease, he should be baptized with all speed, otherwise it could not be cured. When Vladimir heard her message, he said, "If this proves true, then of a surety is the God of the Christians great," and gave order that he should be baptized. The bishop of Kherson, together with the princess's priests, after announcing the tidings, baptized Vladimir, and as the bishop laid his hand upon him, he straightway received his sight. Upon experiencing this miraculous cure, Vladimir glorified God, saying, "I have now perceived the one true God." When his followers beheld this miracle, many of them were also baptized.

Bringing Christianity to the Magyars



87 ▼ *Pope Sylvester II,*

LETTER TO SAINT STEPHEN OF HUNGARY

The Rus' of Kiev began to adopt Byzantine forms of Christian culture shortly before the year 1000, just about the same time that the *Hungarians* were embracing Western European forms of Christian culture. The Hungarians (or *Magyars* as they called themselves) entered Europe as invaders during the late ninth and early tenth centuries. A Finno-Ugric pastoral people out of the Great Steppes of Eurasia, the Hungarians were terrifying as they swept into the eastern portions of the disintegrating Carolingian Empire. Characterized by one Western churchman as an "exceedingly ferocious people . . . crueller than any beast," these fierce horsemen inspired the prayer: "Lord, preserve us from the arrows of the Hungarians."

The Magyars continued to be a menace until King Otto I of Saxony (the future Emperor Otto I) inflicted a crushing defeat upon them at the Battle of the Lechfeld in southern Germany in 955. Soon thereafter they settled down in a region defined by the Middle Danube and the Pannonian Plain, a land they transformed into *Hungary*. They also began receiving Christian missionaries, especially from Saxony, a land and people to which Charlemagne's armies and missionaries had earlier brought Christianity. Ironically, Saxony was now the heart of a revived Western Empire.

The first three Saxon emperors were enthusiastic patrons of this missionary work in Hungary, especially the young and idealistic *Otto III* (r. 983–1002). Otto III, who variously styled himself *servant of the Apostles* and *servant of Jesus Christ* envisioned a Christian empire in which pope and emperor worked harmoniously to create a society permeated by Christian principles. To that end, he appointed to the papacy Gerbert of Aurillac, a monk and the foremost scholar of his day. Gerbert, the first person from the kingdom of France to advance to the papal throne, assumed the name *Sylvester II* (r. 999–1003).

The name was highly significant. The first Sylvester had been bishop of Rome in the time of Constantine the Great, and according to tradition, it was Sylvester I (r. 314–335) who had converted and baptized the Roman emperor. Also according to tradition (and a forged eighth-century document known as *The Donation of Constantine*), Emperor Constantine I had conferred on Pope Sylvester I authority over Rome, Italy, and *the lands of the West*, just before he transferred his capital to Constantinople. There was no truth to these legends, although they were almost universally believed in the West. On his part, Otto III dismissed *The Donation of Constantine* as a fraud but probably believed that Sylvester I and Constantine had worked together closely. Therefore, Gerbert's assumption of the name *Sylvester* was a token of his determination to work alongside this latter-day Constantine to create a Christian commonwealth on Earth, and that included supporting the empire's missionary activities among the Slavs, Scandinavians, and Magyars.

On their part, the Hungarian leaders, beginning with Duke Géza (r. 972–997), were more than willing to accept Western forms of Christianity, but they wanted no part of German overlordship. As part of his program of welcoming missionaries while keeping Otto's empire at arm's length, Géza's son Vajk (r. 997–1038), who changed his name to *Stephen* (which means "crown" in Greek), submitted his land and people directly to papal overlordship. In return, he was invested as king on Christmas Day, 1000, with a crown sent him by Pope Sylvester II (note the parallel with Charlemagne's coronation in 800). For his successful efforts in converting his people to Catholic Christianity, King Stephen was declared a saint in 1083.

The document that follows is Pope Sylvester's letter of 1000 in which he officially conferred the title of *king* on Stephen. Never before had a pope bestowed a royal title on anyone.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. What relationship did this letter establish between Hungary and the papacy? What relationship did it establish between the king of Hungary and the pope?
2. What powers and honors did the grant confer on the king?
3. Based on your answers to the preceding questions, what do you conclude were, to Stephen's mind, the benefits to be gained from accepting the crown from the pope? Why do you think Pope Sylvester made this grant?
4. Otto III approved the pope's action. What do you think Otto might have had in mind?
5. In the later eleventh century and following, the papacy interpreted Sylvester's granting of a crown as an important precedent. How do you think these later popes viewed the act?
6. Compare King Stephen, Prince Vladimir, and their respective alliances with Rome and Constantinople. What is similar? What is different? Which strike you as more significant, the similarities or the differences? What do you conclude from your answer?

Sylvester, bishop, servant of the servants of God, to Stephen, king of the Hungarians, greeting and apostolic benediction. Your ambassadors, especially our dear brother, Astricus, bishop of Colocza,¹ were received by us with the greater joy and accomplished their mission with the greater ease, because we had been divinely forewarned to expect an embassy from a nation still

unknown to us. . . . Surely, according to the apostle: "It is not of him who wills nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy";² and according to the testimony of Daniel: "He changes the times and the seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he reveals the deep and secret things; he knows what is in the darkness";³ for in him is that light which, as John teaches,

¹The bishopric of Kalocsa in central Hungary. Stephen transformed it from a bishopric to an archbishopric. A bishop was the head of a regional church, whereas an arch-

bishop supervised subordinate bishops. See notes 8 and 9.

²The Bible, Epistle to the Romans, 9:16.

³The Bible, Book of Daniel, 2:21–22.

"lights every man who comes into the world."⁴ Therefore we first give thanks to God the Father, and to our Lord Jesus Christ, because he has found in our time another David,⁵ and has again raised up a man after his own heart to feed his people Israel, that is, the chosen race of the Hungarians. Secondly, we praise you for your piety toward God and for your reverence for this Apostolic See,⁶ over which, not by our own merits, but by the mercy of God, we now preside. Finally, we commend the liberality you have shown in offering to St. Peter yourself and your people and your kingdom and possessions by the same ambassadors and letters. For by this deed you have clearly demonstrated that you already are what you have asked us to declare you.⁷ But enough of this; it is not necessary to commend him whom God himself has commended and whose deeds openly proclaim to be worthy of all commendation. Now therefore, glorious son, by the authority of omnipotent God and of St. Peter, the prince of apostles, we freely grant, concede, and bestow with our apostolic benediction all that you have sought from us and from the Apostolic See; namely, the royal crown and name, the creation of the metropolitanate of Gran,⁸ and of the other bishoprics.⁹ Moreover, we receive under the protection of the holy Church the kingdom which you have surrendered to St. Peter, together with yourself and your people, the Hungarian nation; and we now give it back to you and to your heirs and successors to be held, possessed, ruled, and governed. And your heirs and successors, who shall have been legally elected by the nobles, shall duly offer obedience and rever-

ence to us and to our successors in their own persons or by ambassadors, and shall confess themselves the subjects of the Roman Church, who does not hold her subjects as slaves, but receives them all as children. They shall persevere in the Catholic faith and the religion of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and strive always to promote it. And because you have fulfilled the office of the apostles in preaching Christ and propagating his faith, and have tried to do in your realm the work of us and of our clergy, and because you have honored the same prince of apostles above all others, therefore by this privilege we grant you and your successors, who shall have been legally elected and approved by the Apostolic See, the right to have the cross borne before you as a sign of apostleship,¹⁰ after you have been crowned with the crown which we send and according to the ceremony which we have committed to your ambassadors. And we likewise give you full power by our apostolic authority to control and manage all the churches of your realm, both present and future, as divine grace may guide you, as representing us and our successors. All these things are contained more fully and explicitly in that general letter which we have sent by our messenger to you and to your nobles and faithful subjects. And we pray that omnipotent God, who called you even from your mother's womb to the kingdom and crown, and who has commanded us to give you the crown which we had prepared for the duke of Poland,¹¹ may increase continually the fruits of your good works, and sprinkle with the dew of his benediction this young plant of your king-

⁴The Bible, Gospel of John, 1:9.

⁵The king who ruled ancient Israel as its model king from around 1000 to 961 B.C.E. Within his court circle, Charlemagne had also borne the nickname *David*.

⁶The Roman papacy.

⁷A king.

⁸The archbishopric (metropolitanate) of Esztergom, called *Gran* in German. Esztergom was Stephen's capital. Its bishop was now, by Sylvester's act, the *primate*, or chief archbishop, of the Hungarian Church. By transforming Esztergom into a primatial archdiocese, Pope Sylvester made Hungary ecclesiastically independent of Germany.

⁹Eleventh-century Hungary had two archbishops and eight *suffragan*, or subordinate, bishops.

¹⁰The kings of Hungary claimed the title *Apostolic King* into the twentieth century.

¹¹Poland was also undergoing conversion to Western Christianity at this time. Duke Boleslaw the Mighty of Poland (r. 992–1025), an active patron of Roman Catholic missionary work, desired a royal crown and had reason to believe he would receive it around the year 1000. He remained a ducal vassal of the German emperor, however, until 1024, when he finally received his royal crown from the papacy.

dom, and preserve you and your realm and protect you from all enemies, visible and invisible, and, after the trials of the earthly kingship are

past, crown you with an eternal crown in the Kingdom of Heaven.

A Conflict of Authorities

Byzantine emperors such as Justinian the Great were able to exercise a wide range of largely uncontested authority over the Church and churchpeople. On their part, Western emperors and kings, such as Charlemagne, saw themselves in the same light and claimed (and often exercised) similar authority, but their claims were often contested by various popes, who saw themselves as the heads of the Church and the spiritual leaders of Christendom.

In the last quarter of the eleventh century this tension sparked a half-century-long struggle between the Western empire and the papacy known as the *Investiture Controversy*. Waged from 1075 to 1122, the controversy centered on the core issue of who, the pope in Rome or the emperor in Germany, was the supreme, God-anointed head of Christendom on Earth. In 1122 the exhausted parties entered into a peace treaty known as the *Concordat of Worms*, which settled certain peripheral issues but did not resolve the core ideological difference.

During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the papacy reached the height of its moral authority and simultaneously constructed mechanisms of government that transformed the Roman Church into one of the most organized and powerful entities in Europe. Approximately at the same time, several monarchic states in the West were building up their own governmental systems that enabled Western monarchs to govern their lands more completely than ever before.

With the question of the respective powers of popes and secular monarchs still unresolved, these newly strengthened entities were ready by the mid twelfth century for a renewed battle. The result was a continuing cycle of church-state controversies, particularly from about 1150 to around 1300, which set Western Europe along a course of development quite different from that of Byzantium.

A Papal Rejoinder to the Byzantine Emperor

88 ▼ *Pope Innocent III, SOLITAE*

Arguably Innocent III (r. 1198–1216) was the most dynamic and powerful pope of the High Middle Ages (1050–1350). Only thirty-seven years of age when he ascended the papal throne, Innocent brought to his office vigor, a sense of high purpose, and an exalted vision of the pope's place within Christendom.

During his more than eighteen years as pope, Innocent was embroiled in numerous struggles with secular and ecclesiastical lords and dispatched large numbers of letters that articulated his position on a variety of issues. Innocent and his

secretaries composed many of those letters not only for the moment but with an eye toward the future, inasmuch as the pope endeavored to provide church lawyers and subsequent popes with a body of authoritative texts that more fully than ever before defined the place of the pope within Christendom. Papal letters that address important legal and constitutional points are known as *decretals*, and Innocent's decretals proved to be a treasure-trove for church lawyers in his own day and well beyond. In 1209 or 1210 the pope sent a collection of his important decretals to the masters and students at the University of Bologna, Europe's premier center for legal studies, for use in the law courts and lecture halls. One of the decretals contained in the collection was *Solitae*, a letter he wrote in late 1200 to Emperor Alexius III of Constantinople (r. 1195–1203). As is true of all papal letters, the decretal's title derives from its opening word, which means "usual."

In 1198 Alexius had initiated relations with the new pope in the hope of reaching a political alliance against a common enemy, Philip of Hohenstaufen, a claimant to the kingship of Germany and the Western imperial title. Innocent responded to this overture by insisting that the emperor first submit the Byzantine Church to the authority of the Roman papacy and promise to aid the upcoming crusade (sources 91–92) before any political alliance was possible. In early 1199 Alexius dispatched a second letter to Rome in which he attempted to dismiss politely the pope's arguments and preconditions, while leaving the door open for an alliance. Innocent's second letter to the emperor, composed in late 1199, left no doubt that he was serious and would accept nothing less than the Byzantine Church's submission to his papal primacy and Alexius's crusade cooperation. In 1200 Alexius replied with a now-lost third letter that apparently was franker in tone and message than his two earlier dispatches to Rome. *Solitae* was the pope's reply.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. What arguments had Alexius made in his letter of 1200? What do those arguments suggest about relations between emperors and priests in Byzantium?
2. According to Innocent III, what is the proper relationship between the papacy and temporal authority? On what assumptions does the pope base that view?
3. How does Innocent view the papacy in relation to the Byzantine Empire?
4. How does Innocent view the papacy in relation to the universal Church? What is the basis for that vision?
5. On the basis of this letter, how would you characterize papal-Byzantine relations at the opening of the thirteenth century?

To Alexius, Emperor of Constantinople

With our¹ usual affection for you, we have received the letter Your Imperial Excellency dispatched to us through the person of our beloved son, the archdeacon of Durazzo,² a prudent and faithful man. . . .

As you intimated to us in your letter, Your Imperial Sublimity is astonished that we seem to have reproached you in some small way, although we remember that we wrote what we wrote not in a spirit of reproach but rather in the gentle spirit of bringing something to your attention. We have gathered from your letter that your reading of what Saint Peter, the prince of the apostles, wrote, "For the sake of God, be subject to every human creature, as much as to the king, who is the preeminent authority, as to the lords, for they are sent by God to punish evildoers and to praise the doers of good,"³ served not as the cause of your wonder but as a convenient opportunity. What caused us even more reasonably to wonder is that His Imperial Highness wished, through these words and others that he introduced, to place the empire above the priestly dignity and power, and from the authoritative text quoted above he desired to draw out a triple argument. The first argument is based on the text "be subject." The second is based on what follows that: "to the king, who is the preeminent authority." The third is based on the words that are appended directly to that: "to punish evildoers and to praise the doers of good." Imagining through the first argument that the priesthood is a subordinate state, through the second that the empire has precedence, through the third that emperors have received jurisdiction over priests, as well as laypeople, and, indeed, the power of the sword over priests!⁴ Inasmuch as

some priests are good men and some are evildoers, he who, according to the Apostle, bears the sword for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of the doers of good, is able to punish with the sword of vengeance priests who dare to deviate into evil-doing, because the Apostle does not distinguish between priests and everyone else.

Doubtless, had you paid more careful attention to the person speaking these words and the people to whom he was speaking and the meaning of the words, you would not have drawn such an interpretation from the text. For the Apostle is writing to his subordinates, and he has been urging on them the virtue of humility. It was in this context that he said "be subject," because he wanted to place on the priesthood the yoke of subservience and to confer the authority of guidance on those persons to whom he urged priests to be subject. It follows from this also that any slave whatsoever has received power over priests when he says, "to every human creature." Regarding what follows, however, "to the king, who is the preeminent authority," we do not deny that the emperor, to be sure, is preeminent in temporal matters. But the pontiff⁵ has precedence in spiritual affairs, which are as superior to temporal concerns as the body is to the soul. Let it also be noted that the statement was not simply "be subject," but "for the sake of God" was added, nor is the text pure and simply "to the king, who is the preeminent authority," but rather the phrase "as much as" is introduced, perhaps not without reason. What follows, however, "to punish evildoers and to praise the doers of good," should not be understood as meaning that the king or emperor has received the power of the sword over all, the good and the evil, but only over those who, by using the sword, are given over to the jurisdiction of the sword, according

¹Following papal court protocol, the pope referred to himself in the first person plural.

²Modern Durrës, an Adriatic port city in what is today Albania. It was then in Venetian hands and served as an economic and cultural point of exchange between the eastern and western regions of the Mediterranean.

³The Bible, First Epistle of Peter, 2:13.

⁴The power to try and punish clerics. The Church claimed total jurisdiction over all clerics and other members of the Church, who, according to church law, were subject to ecclesiastical tribunals, not secular courts.

⁵Any chief priest, such as a pope, patriarch, or archbishop.

to what the Truth⁶ said: "All who take up the sword shall perish by the sword."⁷ . . .

In regard particularly to him who is the successor of Saint Peter and the vicar of Christ,⁸ you should have been able to perceive the nature of the special privilege of priesthood from what was said not by just anyone but by God, not to a king but to a priest who was not of royal lineage but from a family of priestly succession, namely from the priests who lived in Anathoth: "Behold, I have placed you over peoples and kingdoms, so that you might uproot and scatter, build and plant."⁹ . . .

Moreover, you ought to know that God made two great lights in the firmament of heaven, a greater light and a lesser light — the greater light to preside over the day, the lesser light to preside over the night. Each is great, but one is greater, because the Church is signified by the word *heaven*, according to what the Truth said: "The Kingdom of Heaven is like the human head of a household who gathered workers at the break of day in his vineyard."¹⁰ The word *day* we understand to mean "spiritual," and *night* means "carnal." . . . God gave, therefore, to the firmament of heaven, that is the Universal Church, two great lights. That is, He instituted two dignities, which are pontifical authority and royal power. The one, however, that rules over days, that is over spiritual matters, is greater; the one that rules over nights, that is over carnal matters, is lesser. Thus it is recognized that the difference between the sun and the moon is as great as that between pontiffs and kings.

If His Imperial Highness carefully considers these matters, he would neither make nor permit our venerable brother, the patriarch of Constantinople, a truly great and honorable member of the Church, to sit on the left next to

his footstool, when other kings and princes reverently rise in the presence of archbishops and bishops, as they should, and assign them an honorable seat next to themselves. For, as we believe, Your Prudence is not ignorant of the fact that the exceedingly pious Constantine showed such honor to priests.

For, even though we have not written in rebuke, we may, nevertheless, very reasonably rebuke, as Saint Paul the apostle is recorded to have written, by way of instruction, to Bishop Timothy: "Preach, persist both when it is convenient and when it is inconvenient, importune, censure, implore, rebuke with all patience and learning."¹¹ For our mouth ought not to be bound, but it ought to be open to all, lest we be, as the Prophet says, "mute dogs who do not want to bark."¹² For this reason our correction should not annoy you but rather should be accepted, because a father chides the son whom he loves, and God censures and castigates those whom He loves. We, therefore, carry out the duty of the pastoral office when we entreat, accuse, rebuke, and take pains to win over to those things that are pleasing to the Divine Will, when it is convenient and when it is inconvenient, not just everyone else but even emperors and kings. For all of Christ's sheep were committed to us, in the person of Saint Peter, when the Lord said, "Feed My sheep,"¹³ not making any distinction between these sheep and those, in order to show that anyone who does not recognize Peter and his successors as teachers and pastors is outside His flock. Because it is so well known, we need hardly mention what the Lord said to Peter and, in the person of Peter, to his successors: "Whatsoever you bind on earth will be bound in Heaven, and whatsoever you permit on earth will be permitted in Heaven,"¹⁴ excepting nothing when He

⁶Jesus.

⁷The Bible, Gospel of Matthew, 26:52.

⁸The deputy of Christ. Innocent was the first pope to consistently refer to himself not as the *vicar of Saint Peter* but as the *vicar of Christ*.

⁹These are the words with which God commissioned Jeremiah, a late-seventh-century B.C.E. priest of Anathoth, as a prophet: Book of Jeremiah, 1:10.

¹⁰The Bible, Gospel of Matthew, 20:1.

¹¹The Bible, Second Letter to Timothy, 4:2.

¹²The Bible, Book of Isaiah, 56:10.

¹³The Bible, Gospel of John, 21:15–17.

¹⁴The Bible, Gospel of Matthew, 16:19.

said “whatsoever.” In truth, we do not wish to pursue this any longer, lest We seem contentious or attracted to something of this sort, because, should it be advantageous to boast, one should prefer to boast not of some mark of honor but of his onerous burden, not of his magnitude but of his disquietude. . . . We have learned that it is written: “Everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, and everyone who humbles himself shall be exalted.”¹⁵ . . . Because of that we describe our exaltation in humility, and we regard our greatest exaltation to be our humility. For this reason also we write and confess that we are the servants, not only of God, but of the servants of God and, in the Apostle’s words, we are debtors equally to the wise and the foolish.¹⁶

Your Highness knows whether or not we have been able to lead Your Imperial Excellency to welcoming the good and the useful through our letter and whether we have advised you of proper

and honorable courses of actions because we remember that we invited you to nothing other than the unity of the Church and aid for the land of Jerusalem. May He, Who breathes where He wills and Who holds the hearts of princes in His hand, so inspire your mind that you acquiesce to our advice and counsel and do that which should deservedly produce honor for the Divine Name, profit for the Christian religion, and the salvation of your soul. We, however, will do what we know is expeditious, no matter what you might do.

Would that you made it a point to imitate better in word and deed the devotion to the Apostolic See of your illustrious predecessor, the Emperor Manuel of glorious memory,¹⁷ so that, through its aid and counsel, things might go better for you and your empire, as they did for him. Would that you, at least from this time onward, make up for what you have neglected up to this point.

¹⁵The Bible, Gospel of Luke, 14:11 and 18:14.

¹⁶The Bible, Epistle to the Romans, 1:14.

¹⁷Emperor Manuel I Comnenus (r. 1143–1180) had courted

the goodwill of the papacy as he struggled with a variety of Eastern and Western enemies, including the German emperor Frederick I and the Venetians.

A Middle Ground



89 ▼ *John of Paris,*

A TREATISE ON ROYAL AND PAPAL POWER

Despite their struggles, neither Europe’s popes nor its secular rulers were ever able to overwhelm the other. Consequently, there developed a growing feeling among some observers that perhaps there are two powers, church and state, which have legitimate but different claims upon a subject’s loyalty.

The clearest medieval articulator of this position was John of Paris, a French priest and theologian. John was deeply influenced by thirteenth-century Europe’s rediscovery of Aristotle’s *Politics*, a fourth-century B.C.E. treatise that eloquently presented the position that the sovereign state originates from natural human needs and is necessary for full human development. Around 1302, John composed *A Treatise on Royal and Papal Power*, in which he argued that civil government and the priesthood have separate roles to play in guiding human conduct. Although his was a minority voice in the ongoing struggle between secular and sacred authority, John of Paris represents an important school of thought and a

foreshadowing of what would become, so many centuries later, the Western notion of separation of church and state.

As you read this excerpt, note that John cites *Solitae* in defense of a conclusion that differs radically from that of Innocent III, thereby giving us a glimpse of the range and vitality of medieval debate over this issue.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. According to John of Paris, what are humanity's two ends, or goals, and how is each attained?
2. Why is civil government natural and necessary?
3. Why is the priesthood higher in dignity than secular authority?
4. In what ways is secular authority greater than priestly authority?
5. How has John refuted the core assumption of Innocent III's *two lights* argument?

First it should be known that kingship, properly understood, can be defined as the rule of one man over a perfect multitude so ordered as to promote the public good. . . . Such a government is based on natural law and the law of nations.¹ For, since man is naturally a civil or political creature . . . it is essential for a man to live in a multitude and in such a multitude as is self-sufficient for life. The community of a household or village is not of this sort, but the community of a city or kingdom is, for in a household or village there is not found everything necessary for food, clothing and defense through a whole life as there is in a city or kingdom. But every multitude scatters and disintegrates as each man pursues his own ends unless it is ordered to the common good by some one man who has charge of this common good. . . .

Next it must be borne in mind that man is not ordered only to such a good as can be acquired by nature, which is to live virtuously, but is further ordered to a supernatural end which is eternal life, and the whole multitude of men liv-

ing virtuously is ordered to this. Therefore it is necessary that there be some one man to direct the multitude to this end. If indeed this end could be attained by the power of human nature, it would necessarily pertain to the office of the human king to direct men to this end, for we call a human king him to whom is committed the highest duty of government in human affairs. But since man does not come to eternal life by human power but by divine . . . this kind of rule pertains to a king who is not only man but also God, namely Jesus Christ . . . and because Christ was to withdraw his corporal presence from the Church it was necessary for him to institute others as ministers who would administer the sacraments² to men, and these are called priests. . . . Hence priesthood may be defined in this fashion. Priesthood is a spiritual power of administering sacraments to the faithful conferred by Christ on ministers of the Church. . . .

From the foregoing material it is easy to see which is first in dignity, the kingship or the

¹Laws common to civilized peoples that govern their international dealings.

²The seven rites, or ceremonies, of the Church that confer God's blessing, or grace. When it came to the sacraments,

there was no disagreement between the Roman and Byzantine Churches. Each considered them to be essential vehicles of salvation instituted by Jesus.

priesthood. . . . A kingdom is ordered to this end, that an assembled multitude may live virtuously, as has been said, and it is further ordered to a higher end which is the enjoyment of God; and responsibility for this end belongs to Christ, whose ministers and vicars are the priests. Therefore the priestly power is of greater dignity than the secular and this is commonly conceded. See *Dist.* 96 C.10, "As gold is more precious than lead so the priestly order is higher than the royal power."³ And in the *Decretales* 1.33.6 it is said that as the sun excels the moon so spiritualities excel temporalities.⁴ . . .

But if the priest is greater in himself than the prince and is greater in dignity, it does not follow that he is greater in all respects. For the lesser secular power is not related to the greater spiritual power as having its origin from it or being derived from it as the power of a proconsul is related to that of the emperor, which is greater in all respects since the power of the former is derived from the latter. The relationship is rather like that of a head of a household to a general of armies, since one is not derived from the other but both from a superior power. And so the secular power is greater than the spiritual in some things, namely in temporal affairs, and in such affairs it is not subject to the spiritual power in any way because it does not have its origin from it but rather both have their origin immediately from the one supreme power, namely the divine. Accordingly the inferior power is not subject to the superior in all things but only in those where

the supreme power has subordinated it to the greater. A teacher of literature or an instructor in morals directs the members of a household to a nobler end, namely the knowledge of truth, than a doctor who is concerned with a lower end, namely the health of bodies, but who would say therefore the doctor should be subjected to the teacher in preparing his medicines? For this is not fitting, since the head of the household who established both in his house did not subordinate the lesser to the greater in this respect. Therefore the priest is greater than the prince in spiritual affairs and, on the other hand, the prince is greater in temporal affairs. . . .

Concerning the ecclesiastical power of censure or correction it should be known that, directly, it is only spiritual, for it can impose no penalty in the external court but a spiritual one. . . .

As for the argument that corporeal beings are ruled by spiritual beings and depend on them as on a cause, I answer that an argument so constructed fails on many grounds. Firstly because it assumes that royal power is corporeal and not spiritual and that it has charge of bodies and not of souls which is false, as is said above, since it is ordained, not for any common good of the citizens whatsoever, but for that which consists in living according to virtue. Accordingly the Philosopher⁵ says in the *Ethics*⁶ that the intention of a legislator is to make men good and to lead them to virtue, and in the *Politics*⁷ that a legislator is more estimable than a doctor since the legislator has charge of souls, the doctor of bodies.

³A quotation from Gratian's *Concordance of Discordant Canons*, known popularly as the *Decretum*. Compiled ca. 1140, it became the standard primary textbook of Western church law.

⁴See *Solita*. The citation is to the official collection of decretals authorized by Pope Gregory IX in 1234.

⁵Aristotle.

⁶Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*.

⁷Aristotle's *Politics*, whose rediscovery by thirteenth-century Europe occasioned a revolution in political thought.

Byzantium and the West in the Age of the Crusades: The Dividing of Christendom

Many history textbooks continue to perpetuate the myth that the Churches of Constantinople and Rome entered into clear and permanent *schism*, or separation, in 1054 when the patriarch of Constantinople and representatives of the pope hurled mutual curses of damnation and excommunication at one another's Church. In fact, nothing of the sort happened. It is true that, following a heated argument, several papal envoys laid a sentence of excommunication on the patriarch and his supporters. But they did so on their own initiative, and their attack was largely aimed at one man — Patriarch Michael Cerularius. It is also true that Byzantine church officials responded in kind by excommunicating the offending Western churchmen. But the Byzantine Church officially refused to believe that the legates were true representatives of the pope or the Western Church. The point is that this celebrated incident of 1054 was not the *cause* of a visible rift between these two branches of Christendom. It was, however, one of many *symptoms* of a growing alienation between the two Christian cultures.

The factors that led to the division between the Churches of Catholic Rome and Orthodox Constantinople were rooted in centuries of political separation and cultural estrangement. The process began as early as the fourth century and accelerated as time went on. Not until the latter half of the eleventh century, however, when the papacy promoted an agenda of transforming Christian society under papal leadership, did the differences between the Byzantine and Western visions of the world and the Church begin to become apparent.

One expression of the new papal self-confidence was its attempt to marshal the military vigor of the West in a series of holy wars known as the *crusades*. As early as 1074, news of Seljuk Turkish victories over Byzantine forces moved Pope Gregory VII to propose publicly that he lead an army of fifty thousand volunteers to rescue these Christian siblings in the East. The Investiture Controversy prevented him from realizing this dream, but the papacy never forgot the project. His successor once-removed, Pope Urban II, responded to overtures from Emperor Alexius I for help in raising troops for the Byzantine army by calling upon the warrior class of the West, and especially of the pope's own French homeland, to march eastward to rescue their fellow Christians from Islam and to liberate Jerusalem from the infidel. The pope's appeal, which he enunciated for the first time on November 27, 1095, provided the impetus for the First Crusade (1096–1101).

By transforming this simple request from Emperor Alexius for assistance in raising mercenary soldiers for the imperial army into a call for a mass expedition of holy warriors, Pope Urban unleashed the vigor of emerging Europe upon an unsuspecting Eastern Mediterranean World. In all probability, the pope believed that by succoring the Christians of the East, the crusaders would help to heal the religious differences between Byzantium and the West — differences that were

becoming increasingly apparent to both parties by this time. In an act of ultimate Christian charity — putting their lives at risk for fellow Christians — the crusaders (the very name means “cross bearers”) would usher in a new age of harmony and peace. At least that was the dream. As the following three sources suggest, however, the crusaders brought not peace but a sword. And that sword severed Christendom.

The West and the First Crusade from a Byzantine Perspective



90 ▼ *Anna Comnena, THE ALEXIAD*

The response to Pope Urban II's idealistic appeal was astounding. Between 1096 and 1101 three major waves of crusaders left Europe for the Holy Land; altogether, maybe as many as 130,000 men, women, and children participated, of whom probably only about 10 percent were professional warriors. Urban set in motion a phenomenon that was to engage much of Europe's energy for the next several centuries and would touch all levels of European society. What is more, the crusades would have a profound impact on the immediate and long-range histories of Islam, Byzantium, and, ultimately, the world. Their effects are still being felt today.

The following document, which reflects a twelfth-century Byzantine view of Western Europe and its crusaders, comes from the pen of Anna Comnena (1083–after 1148), daughter of Emperor Alexius I (r. 1081–1118). Anna, who had received an extensive education in classical Greek literature and thought, undertook to write the history of her father's eventful reign following the death of her husband in 1137. The fact that she entitled the work the *Alexiad*, in imitation of Homer's epic poem the *Iliad*, clearly indicates the view she held of her father's place in history. Anna's protestations of historical objectivity notwithstanding, this is partisan history, but its very partisanship allows us to see the world through Byzantine eyes.

In the first selection Anna comments on the Investiture Controversy, a struggle that provided the domestic background to the First Crusade. Although it was much more than just an instance of papal muscle flexing, on one important level Urban's call for the First Crusade was an assertion of papal moral supremacy over Emperor Henry IV (r. 1056–1106), with whom the pope was locked in ideological battle. The second selection deals with the arrival on Byzantine soil in 1096 of the lead elements of the First Crusade.

Anna's history contained more than just a few errors, misconceptions, and polemical diatribes whenever she wrote about the West and Westerners, but those very flaws add to its worth, inasmuch as they reveal how at least one high-born Byzantine viewed the papacy and the West in the first half of the twelfth century.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. What does Anna Comnena think of Pope Gregory VII's actions in the Investiture Controversy?
2. What does she think of the Roman papacy's claims?
3. To her mind, who is the Church's chief priest, and what is the source of his authority?
4. What was Princess Anna's view of the Western crusaders?
5. The age of the crusades witnessed a growing estrangement between the societies of Western Europe and Byzantium. Judging from Anna's account, what do you think contributed to that rift?

THE INVESTITURE CONTROVERSY

Meanwhile, an event occurred which is worth relating, as it, too, contributed to this man's [Emperor Alexius] reputation and good fortune. . . . Now it happened that the pope of Rome¹ had a difference with Henry, king of Germany.² . . . The pope is a very high dignitary, and is protected by troops of various nationalities. The dispute between the king and the pope was this: the latter accused Henry of not bestowing livings³ as free gifts, but selling them for money,⁴ and occasionally entrusting archbishoprics to unworthy recipients,⁵ and he also brought further charges of a similar nature against him. The king of Germany on his side indicted the pope of usurpation, as he had seized the apostolic chair without his consent.⁶ Moreover, he had the effrontery to utter reckless threats against the pope, saying that if he did not resign his self-elected office, he should be expelled from it. . . . When these words reached the pope's ears, he vented his rage upon Henry's ambassadors;⁷ first he tortured them inhumanly, then clipped their hair with

scissors, and sheared their beards with a razor, and finally committed a most indecent outrage upon them, which transcended even the insolence of barbarians, and so sent them away. My womanly and princely dignity forbids my naming the outrage inflicted on them, for it was not only unworthy of a high priest, but of anyone who bears the name of a Christian. I abhor this barbarian's idea, and more still the deed, and I should have defiled both my pen and my paper had I described it explicitly.⁸ But as a display of barbaric insolence, and a proof that time in its flow produces men with shameless morals, ripe for any wickedness, this alone will suffice, if I say, that I could not bear to disclose or relate even the tiniest word about what he did. And this was the work of a high priest. Oh, justice! The deed of the supreme high priest! nay, of one who claimed to be the president of the whole world, as indeed the Latins assert and believe, but this, too, is a bit of their boasting. For when the imperial seat was transferred from Rome hither to our native Queen of Cities, and the senate, and the whole administration, there was also

¹Pope Gregory VII (r. 1073–1085).

²Henry IV. As king of Germany, Henry was also emperor-elect of the Western Roman Empire.

³A *living*, also known as a *prebend*, was the income a cleric received to support him in his clerical office and duties.

⁴The papacy claimed that lay rulers, such as Henry, were guilty of the sin of *simony* — the selling of sacred clerical offices and other holy items.

⁵According to the papal reformers, this was another abuse

of the system known as *lay investiture*, and some radical reformers, such as Gregory VII, called upon pious lay people to throw out unworthy clerics who had been invested in their offices by lay rulers.

⁶By tradition, the pope-elect applied for imperial approval of his election.

⁷There is no evidence for the abuse that she recounts in the account that follows.

⁸Anna seems to imply that Gregory had the envoys castrated.

transferred the arch-hierarchical primacy.⁹ And the emperors from the very beginning have given the supreme right to the episcopacy¹⁰ of Constantinople, and the Council of Chalcedon emphatically raised the bishop of Constantinople to the highest position, and placed all the dioceses of the inhabited world under his jurisdiction.¹¹ There can be no doubt that the insult done to the ambassadors was aimed at the king who sent them; not only because he scourged them, but also because he was the first to invent this new kind of outrage. For by his actions, the pope suggested, I think, that the power of the king was despicable, and by this horrible outrage on his ambassadors that he, a demi-god, as it were, was treating with a demi-ass! The pope consequently, by wreaking his insolence on the ambassadors, and sending them back to the king in the state I have mentioned, provoked a very great war.

THE ARRIVAL OF THE FRANKS

Before he¹² had enjoyed even a short rest, he heard a report of the approach of innumerable Frankish¹³ armies. Now he dreaded their arrival for he knew their irresistible manner of attack, their unstable and mobile character and all the peculiar natural and concomitant characteristics which the Frank retains throughout; and he also knew that they were always agape for money, and seemed to disregard their truces readily for any reason that cropped up. For he had always heard this reported of them, and found it very true. However, he did not lose heart, but prepared

himself in every way so that, when the occasion called, he would be ready for battle. And indeed the actual facts were far greater and more terrible than rumor made them. For the whole of the West and all the barbarian tribes which dwell between the further side of the Adriatic and the pillars of Heracles,¹⁴ had all migrated in a body and were marching into Asia through the intervening Europe, and were making the journey with all their household. . . . And they were all so zealous and eager that every highroad was full of them. And those Frankish soldiers were accompanied by an unarmed host more numerous than the sand or the stars, carrying palms and crosses on their shoulders; women and children, too, came away from their countries.¹⁵ And the sight of them was like many rivers streaming from all sides, and they were advancing towards us through Dacia¹⁶ generally with all their hosts. . . .

The incidents of the barbarians' approach followed in the order I have described, and persons of intelligence could feel that they were witnessing a strange occurrence. The arrival of these multitudes did not take place at the same time nor by the same road (for how indeed could such masses starting from different places have crossed the straits of Lombardy all together?). Some first, some next, others after them and thus successively all accomplished the transit, and then marched through the continent. Each army was preceded, as we said, by an unspeakable number of locusts; and all who saw this more than once recognized them as forerunners of the Frankish armies.

⁹Chief *patriarch* of the universal Church (see note 10).

¹⁰Another term for *bishopric*. A *bishop* was the chief priest of a city or large town and its surrounding lands. An *archbishop* was the bishop of a major city and exercised authority over a number of subordinate, or suffragan, bishops. A *patriarch* was the bishop of such an exceptionally important city that he claimed authority over vast areas and a large number of subordinate archbishops and bishops. The question was, Who was the chief patriarch of the Church — the bishop of Rome or the bishop of Constantinople?

¹¹Wrong. The Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon of 451

stipulated in canon (regulation) 28 that the bishop of Constantinople enjoyed a primacy of honor second only to that of the bishop of Rome because Constantinople was the *New Rome*.

¹²Emperor Alexius.

¹³*Frank* was a term used in the eastern Mediterranean to refer to any Westerner (see Chapter 9, source 77).

¹⁴The Strait of Gibraltar.

¹⁵This, the first wave of the crusade, was the so-called (and misnamed) *Peasants' Crusade of 1096*.

¹⁶Hungary and Romania.

The Fourth Crusade from a Byzantine Perspective



91 ▼ *Nicetas Choniates, ANNALS*

As Anna Comnena's account suggests, from the Byzantine perspective, the crusades were nothing less than barbarian invasions from the West. Before the First Crusade ended, Latin and Greek Christians had already clashed on the field of battle, although these initial skirmishes were not terribly serious (except to the people who died in them). During the twelfth century, as Latin fortunes suffered a number of reverses in the Holy Land, two additional major crusades were sent eastward: the Second Crusade (1147–1149) and the Third Crusade (1189–1192). Each further exacerbated Latin-Byzantine relations by engendering increasingly sharp conflicts and misunderstandings.

Following Saladin's recapture of Jerusalem in 1187 and the failure of the Third Crusade to retake the holy city, the West was eager to strike back at Islam. In the early thirteenth century, a force made up largely of French warriors and Venetian sailors planned to strike at Islam by capturing Alexandria in Egypt, thereby relieving pressure on the embattled Latin settlements in the Holy Land. That particular assault never took place. Rather, circumstances led the army and fleet of the Fourth Crusade (1202–1204) to Constantinople, where the crusaders became embroiled in a dynastic power struggle between rival imperial claimants. Eventually the crusaders attacked Constantinople on April 12, 1204, and captured it the following day. After three days of brutal looting, the crusaders settled down and established the Latin Empire of Constantinople (1204–1261).

The Byzantines regained their capital city in 1261, but their empire was by then largely a shadow of its former self. Just as significant, the events of 1204 caused the final and, until today, irreconcilable rupture between the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox branches of Christianity.

The Byzantine nobleman, court official, and historian Nicetas Choniates (ca. 1155–ca. 1216) included a vivid account of the Fourth Crusade in his *Annals*, a history that traces Byzantine imperial fortunes from 1118 to 1207. His account is especially telling inasmuch as he was an eyewitness to and victim of the crusaders' capture and pillage of Constantinople. The following selection begins early on the morning of April 13. On the previous day, after bloody and bitter fighting, the crusaders had managed to penetrate the walls of the city and set up a small armed camp within hostile territory. With the situation still in doubt, they spent a sleepless night, wondering what the morning would bring.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. According to Nicetas, how do the crusaders show themselves to be hypocrites?
2. According to Nicetas, what is the crusaders' greatest sin?

3. What, does he imply, could Constantinople expect if it were captured by Muslims?

The enemy, who had expected otherwise, found no one openly venturing into battle or taking up arms to resist; they saw that the way was open before them and everything there for the taking. The narrow streets were clear and the crossroads unobstructed, safe from attack, and advantageous to the enemy. The populace, moved by the hope of propitiating them, had turned out to greet them with crosses and venerable icons¹ of Christ as was customary during festivals of solemn processions. But their disposition was not at all affected by what they saw, nor did their lips break into the slightest smile, nor did the unexpected spectacle transform their grim and frenzied glance and fury into a semblance of cheerfulness. Instead, they plundered with impunity and stripped their victims shamelessly, beginning with their carts. Not only did they rob them of their substance but also the articles consecrated to God; the rest fortified themselves all around with defensive weapons as their horses were roused at the sound of the war trumpet.

What then should I recount first and what last of those things dared at that time by these murderous men? O, the shameful dashing to earth of the venerable icons and the flinging of the relics² of the saints, who had suffered for Christ's sake, into defiled places! How horrible it was to see the Divine Body and Blood of Christ³ poured out and thrown to the ground! These forerunners of Antichrist,⁴ chief agents and harbingers of his anticipated ungodly deeds, seized as plunder the precious chalices and patens;⁵ some they smashed, taking possession of the ornaments embellishing them, and they set the remaining

vessels on their tables to serve as bread dishes and wine goblets. Just as happened long ago, Christ was now disrobed and mocked, his garments were parted, and lots were cast for them by this race; and although his side was not pierced by the lance, yet once more streams of Divine Blood poured to the earth.

The report of the impious acts perpetrated in the Great Church⁶ are unwelcome to the ears. The table of sacrifice, fashioned from every kind of precious material and fused by fire into one whole — blended together into a perfection of one multicolored thing of beauty, truly extraordinary and admired by all nations — was broken into pieces and divided among the despoilers, as was the lot of all the sacred church treasures, countless in number and unsurpassed in beauty. They found it fitting to bring out as so much booty the all-hallowed vessels and furnishings which had been wrought with incomparable elegance and craftsmanship from rare materials. In addition, in order to remove the pure silver which overlay the railing of the bema,⁷ the wondrous pulpit and the gates, as well as that which covered a great many other adornments, all of which were plated with gold, they led to the very sanctuary of the temple itself mules and asses with packsaddles; some of these, unable to keep their feet on the smoothly polished marble floors, slipped and were pierced by knives so that the excrement from the bowels and the spilled blood defiled the sacred floor. Moreover, a certain silly woman laden with sins . . . the handmaid of demons, the workshop of unspeakable spells and reprehensible charms, waxing wanton against Christ, sat upon the synthronon⁸ and intoned a

¹Sacred pictures.

²Highly revered body parts and other items associated with the saints and Jesus (see source 92).

³Consecrated eucharistic bread and wine, which both Western and Eastern Christians believed was the actual body and blood of Jesus.

⁴An evil false Christ who will momentarily reign prior to Jesus' Second Coming.

⁵Vessels used in the sacrifice of the Mass.

⁶Hagia Sophia (see source 83).

⁷The sanctuary where Mass is performed.

⁸The patriarch's throne.

song, and then whirled about and kicked up her heels in dance.

It was not that these crimes were committed in this fashion while others were not, or that some acts were more heinous than others, but that the most wicked and impious deeds were perpetrated by all with one accord. Did these madmen, raging thus against the sacred, spare pious matrons and girls of marriageable age or those maidens who, having chosen a life of chastity, were consecrated to God? Above all, it was a difficult and arduous task to mollify the barbarians with entreaties and to dispose them kindly towards us, as they were highly irascible and bilious and unwilling to listen to anything. Everything incited their anger, and they were thought fools and became a laughingstock. He who spoke freely and openly was rebuked, and often the dagger would be drawn against him who expressed a small difference of opinion or who hesitated to carry out their wishes.

The whole head was in pain. There were lamentations and cries of woe and weeping in the narrow ways, wailing at the crossroads, moaning in the temples, outcries of men, screams of women, the taking of captives, and the dragging about, tearing in pieces, and raping of bodies heretofore sound and whole. They who were bashful of their sex were led about naked, they who were venerable in their old age uttered plaintive cries, and the wealthy were despoiled of their riches. Thus it was in the squares, thus it was on the corners, thus it was in the temples, thus it was in the hiding places; for there was no place that could escape detection or that could offer asylum to those who came streaming in.

O Christ our Emperor, what tribulation and distress of men at that time! The roaring of the sea, the darkening and dimming of the sun, the turning of the moon into blood, the displacement of the stars — did they not foretell in this way the last evils? Indeed, we have seen the abomination of desolation stand in the holy place,

rounding off meretricious and petty speeches and other things which were moving definitely, if not altogether, contrariwise to those things deemed by Christians as holy and ennobling the word of faith.

Such then, to make a long story short, were the outrageous crimes committed by the Western armies against the inheritance of Christ. Without showing any feelings of humanity whatsoever, they exacted from all their money and chattel, dwellings and clothing, leaving to them nothing of all their goods. Thus behaved the brazen neck, the haughty spirit, the high brow, the ever-shaved and youthful cheek, the bloodthirsty right hand, the wrathful nostril, the disdainful eye, the insatiable jaw, the hateful heart, the piercing and running speech practically dancing over the lips. More to blame were the learned and wise among men, they who were faithful to their oaths, who loved the truth and hated evil, who were both more pious and just and scrupulous in keeping the commandments of Christ than we "Greeks."⁹ Even more culpable were those who had raised the cross to their shoulders, who had time and again sworn by it and the sayings of the Lord to cross over Christian lands without bloodletting, neither turning aside to the right nor inclining to the left, and to take up arms against the Saracens and to stain red their swords in their blood; they who had sacked Jerusalem, and had taken an oath not to marry or to have sexual intercourse with women as long as they carried the cross on their shoulders, and who were consecrated to God and commissioned to follow in his footsteps.

In truth, they were exposed as frauds. Seeking to avenge the Holy Sepulcher,¹⁰ they raged openly against Christ and sinned by overturning the Cross with the cross they bore on their backs, not even shuddering to trample on it for the sake of a little gold and silver. By grasping pearls, they rejected Christ, the pearl of great price, scattering among the most accursed of brutes the

⁹A sarcastic reference to Western clerics who maintained they were better Christians than these degenerate *Greeks*.

¹⁰The Tomb of Christ, which is in Jerusalem.

All-Hallowed One. The sons of Ismael¹¹ did not behave in this way, for when the Latins overpowered Sion¹² the Latins showed no compassion or kindness to their race.¹³ Neither did the Ismaelites neigh after Latin women, nor did they turn the cenotaph of Christ¹⁴ into a common burial place of the fallen, nor did they transform the entranceway of the life-bringing tomb into a passageway leading down into Hades, nor did they replace the Resurrection with the Fall. Rather, they allowed everyone to depart in exchange for the payment of a few gold coins; they

took only the ransom money and left to the people all their possessions, even though these numbered more than the grains of sand. Thus the enemies of Christ dealt magnanimously with the Latin infidels, inflicting upon them neither sword, nor fire, nor hunger, nor persecution, nor nakedness, nor bruises, nor constraints.¹⁵ How differently, as we have briefly recounted, the Latins treated us who love Christ and are their fellow believers, guiltless of any wrong against them.

¹¹Muslims. Arabs claim descent from Abraham (Ibrahim) through his son Ishmael (Ismail).

¹²Jerusalem.

¹³The army of the First Crusade captured Jerusalem in a blood bath in July 1099.

¹⁴A cenotaph is a monument. This is a reference to the crusader Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, which

stands over the presumed sites where Jesus was crucified, buried, and arose from the dead.

¹⁵Nicetas contrasts Saladin's treatment of the defeated Latins, after he captured Jerusalem in October 1187, with the crusaders' actions at Jerusalem in July 1099 and in Constantinople.

The Fourth Crusade from a Western Perspective



92 ▼ *Gunther of Pairis,* *A CONSTANTINOPOLITAN HISTORY*

One of the participants in the April 1204 looting of Constantinople was Martin, abbot of the Cistercian monastery of Pairis, which was located in the Vosges Mountains of German-speaking Alsace. Upon his return to Pairis in 1205, Martin commissioned one of the monastery's brothers, Gunther, to compose an account of the abbot's adventures on the crusade. Gunther (ca. 1150?–after 1210?), already an accomplished scholar and poet, took this opportunity to construct the *Hystoria Constantinopolitana* (*A Constantinopolitan History*), a literary masterpiece written to reveal the ways of God to humanity.

The following three selections come from chapters 1, 19, and 22 of his twenty-five-chapter history. In the first Gunther sets the tone and theme of his work; in the second he recounts his abbot's exploits as Martin participates in the plundering of the city; in the third he tells of an incident in the crusader port of Acre to which Abbot Martin had sailed after his adventures in Constantinople.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. Gunther was a master writer who deliberately employed irony throughout the *Hystoria Constantinopolitana*. How did he employ irony in Chapter 19? Be specific and thorough in identifying all uses of this device.

2. Consider this irony now in the light of Chapters 1 and 22. What seems to be the message, therefore, of Chapter 19?
3. Compose Nicetas Choniates's commentary on these three chapters.

CHAPTER 1

All manifestations of divine power excite such intensive wonder that unextraordinary phenomena should not be judged divine. Still, we are particularly in the habit of marveling at those great and difficult deeds which that divine power deigns to display through simple persons — persons who humbly in their own sight are the least of humanity and are deemed unequal to such tasks by others. For this reason, it is more marvelous that the people of the children of Israel were delivered from the tyranny of Pharaoh and out of the iron furnace of Egyptian slavery through Moses, a humble man who, holding no office, tended the sheep of his father-in-law Jethro, than if this people had been freed through some very powerful king in mighty battle and by thousands of soldiers. . . . Certainly, the less God's works are joined to human ability, the more the majesty of divine power shines forth within them.

For this reason, it seemed acceptable for me to relate . . . certain truly great and difficult deeds that the Lord has deigned to effect in our time through a certain rather modest and humble man to the praise and glory of His name, the pious memory of this particular man,¹ the perpetual felicity of our present place,² and, most assuredly, the honor and delight of the entire German people or, more truly and importantly, for the consolation and protection of the whole Western Church. The pages of this story of ours will contain absolutely nothing false or doubtful. Rather, they will adhere to the true and strict sequence of events, just as this man, about whom we are about to say much, rather humbly and bashfully narrated the pure and simple story to us. We do not dare write about the praise and commendation of which this man is worthy lest

he, who attributes everything to God and seeks to ascribe nothing to himself, be offended by his praises. Nevertheless, neither will we be able to keep entirely silent altogether, lest we do a clear injustice to God, the author of all these deeds, who is accustomed to exalt His humble people. Therefore we will be careful to balance our pen between the two, so that the mighty works of God, which were accomplished through him, might not lie concealed, and so that this man might remain undisturbed in his humility.

Therefore, whoever is inspired to pick up this, our little book, or to read it, let him also zealously bring sagacity and diligence of mind to the things treated herein, which are meant to be minutely examined. For he will find here momentous, well-known events which would never have taken place or happened without divine direction. We also want the reader to be forewarned that even if things done by our own people appear impious, he must not doubt that they were, nevertheless, effected by the Divine Will, which is always and everywhere just.

CHAPTER 19

While the victors were rapidly plundering the conquered city, which they had made their own by right of battle, Abbot Martin began to think also about his own booty and, lest he remain empty-handed while everyone else got rich, he resolved to use his own consecrated hands for pillage. But because he thought it improper to touch secular spoils with those same hands, he began to plan how he might scrape together for himself some portion of those relics of the saints, which he knew to be in great quantity there.

Accordingly, foreseeing something grand, he took along with him one of his two chaplains

¹Abbot Martin, who was still alive in 1205 when Gunther wrote these words.

²Pairis, which was enriched by the relics that Martin brought home.

and headed for a certain church which was greatly venerated because the mother of the extremely famous Emperor Emmanuel had her splendid tomb there.³ Although this seemed to be significant to the Greeks, our people considered it inconsequential. A large hoard of money from the entire surrounding countryside was stored there and also precious relics, which, in the vain hope of security, the Greeks had brought to the same spot from neighboring churches and monasteries. Before the city was stormed this fact had also been told to our people by those whom the Greeks had expelled. Since many pilgrims were simultaneously breaking into this church and others were greedily occupied with other matters, such as stealing gold, silver, and every sort of precious article, Martin, thinking it improper to commit sacrilege except in a holy cause, sought out a more remote spot, where the very sanctity of the place seemed to promise that it was possible to find there those objects he so greatly desired.

There he found a certain old man, handsome of face and with a long white beard — definitely a priest, but quite different in appearance from our priests,⁴ and for this reason the abbot thought him a layman. With an inward calmness yet in a truly terrifying voice, Martin thundered violently: “Come, faithless old man, show me the more powerful of the relics you guard. Otherwise, understand that you will be punished immediately with death.” The old man was truly terrified by the shouting rather than by the words, inasmuch as he heard the former but could not understand the latter. Knowing that Martin could not communicate in the Greek tongue, the old man began to speak in the Roman language,⁵ which he had learned to an extent, in order to

appease the man with flattery and mollify his anger (which really did not exist). In reply, the abbot was barely able to force out a few words of the same language, in order to communicate to the old man what he demanded of him. Then, examining Martin’s face and dress and thinking it more tolerable that a man of religion violate⁶ the holy relics in awe and reverence, rather than that worldly men should pollute them, possibly, with bloodstained hands, the old man opened for Martin an iron chest and showed him the desired treasure, which Abbot Martin judged pleasing and more desirable to him than all the riches of Greece. On seeing it, the abbot hurriedly and greedily thrust in both hands, and, as he was girded for action, both he and the chaplain filled the folds of their habits with sacred sacrilege. He wisely concealed those relics which seemed to him the most powerful and left at once. What those relics are that the holy robber appropriated for himself, and how worthy they are of veneration, is set forth more appropriately at the end of this little work.⁷

Therefore, as he was hurrying back toward the ships, so overstuffed, so to speak, those who had come to know and love him saw him from the ships, even as they were hurrying toward the pillage. They light-heartedly asked whether he had looted anything or with what articles he was so loaded down. He, as always was the case, said with smiling countenance and merry words: “We have done well.” To which they replied: “Thanks be to God.”⁸

CHAPTER 22

I should like to interject certain things at this point in our narrative. Even if everything else

³The abbey church of Christ *Pantokrator* (ruler of the World).

⁴Western priests did not wear beards; Eastern priests did.

⁵Probably an Italian dialect used for the purpose of trade with Italian merchants in Constantinople.

⁶The Latin verb that he uses, *contrectaret*, has a number of odious connotations, such as “dishonor,” “touch illicitly,” “have sexual intercourse with,” and “steal,” and Gunther, a brilliant wordsmith, always chose his words carefully.

⁷The relics included a trace of Christ’s blood; a piece of the

Holy Cross; a piece of the body of Saint John the Baptist; the arm of Saint James the Apostle; the foot of Saint Cosmas; numerous assorted body parts of other saints; and bits and pieces of various sacred places and artifacts, such as a piece of stone from the site where Christ fasted and a piece of wood from the table of the Last Supper.

⁸With this phrase, *Deo gratias*, the Mass normally is brought to an end.

were false, they would adequately prove that the things effected through Abbot Martin — both those deeds which we have already narrated and those which still remain to be told — received direction from the font of Divine Providence. Specifically, on the third night before Martin began his return voyage home, a certain cleric with whom he was quite friendly, Aegidius by name, a native of Bohemia . . . who intended to return in the same ship with the abbot — indeed not while sleeping but while wide-awake — saw very clearly (as he vehemently asserted) two angels at the very spot where the sacred relics were stored. This was also the place where he and the abbot had sleeping quarters (the abbot, of course, in order to guard the sacred articles closely). Aegidius, however, was totally ignorant of what was stored there. These angels were seen in the vicinity of the chest in which God's holy gifts were hidden, engaged in a service of wondrous devotion, praising with every reverence God, who had bestowed these articles on His servant. More-

over, when that service of divine veneration ended, with one encouraging the other, they determinedly called upon God to place under His protection that very man to whom He had given such goods, along with all who were attached to him.

Anyway, when morning came and Aegidius related this indisputable vision to the abbot, suddenly in the midst of his words he burst into tears from the great stirring within his heart, and he said: "I do not know who you might be, where you have come from, or what you are guarding in that chest of yours. What I do know for certain, however, is that the hand of God is with you. For this reason I ought not leave the company of Your Holiness during this voyage, since I believe most certainly that I could not possibly be in any jeopardy while aboard the ship on which you are traveling." The abbot was struck by the miracle of this man's holy vision, especially considering the faith of the man, whom he had come to perceive as devout and truthful.

Chapter 11

Africa and the Americas

As we saw in Chapter 5, toward the end of the first century B.C.E. the dominant civilizations of Eurasia and North Africa were loosely linked through a series of trade networks and imperialistic adventures. The result was the first Afro-Eurasian Ecumene, or universal community, whose heyday extended down to about 200 C.E. The term itself is somewhat misleading, however, because most of Africa south of the Sahara Desert lay outside of this first ecumene of the so-called Old World.

The cultures of the so-called New World — the Americas — also did not participate in that first age of Afro-Eurasian linkage, nor in the second, which peaked between 1250 and 1350. A few adventurers and lost sailors from Africa and Eurasia undoubtedly stumbled across the lands of America prior to 1492, as was the case with a handful of Vikings who set up a short-lived colony in northern Newfoundland around 1000 C.E. Nevertheless, there is no convincing evidence that these occasional visitors established any meaningful links between the Americas and the outside world, nor is there reason to believe that they had any substantial impact on the development of Amerindian cultures. Prior to the late fifteenth century C.E., the American peoples developed their societies and civilizations in essential isolation from the lands that lay across the Pacific and Atlantic oceans. Isolated though they might have been from the rest of the world, most Amerindian peoples were linked, although loosely, in an *American Ecumene* that made possible the spread of goods and cultural influences over vast expanses. Maize, for example, initially domesticated as early as 4000 B.C.E. in the highlands of central Mexico, had spread to Peru by 2000 B.C.E. and Canada by 1000 C.E.

Sub-Saharan Africa also had its early cultural and trade networks, which made possible a widespread diffusion of such technologies as agriculture and iron metallurgy and such ideas as the faith of Islam. Moreover, despite the continued growth of the Sahara Desert from around 2500 B.C.E. to the present, interior Africa has never been totally cut off from the rest of the Afro-Eurasian World, even in the most ancient times. However, the volume of traffic across the Sahara only began to achieve significant proportions after the introduction into North Africa of the Arabian, or single-humped, camel as a beast of burden during the early centuries C.E. Conquest of western North Africa by Muslim Arabs in the seventh century provided another major boost to trans-Saharan trade, so that by about the year 1000, four major commercial routes connected the north with western sub-Saharan Africa. Gold, more than any other single item, drew the camel caravans of Berber and Arab traders to the inland kingdoms of West Africa's grasslands, but large numbers of slaves were also sold for transportation northward to markets throughout the Mediterranean and beyond. In return, western sub-Saharan Africans received salt, raw copper, fine horses, and such manufactured goods as tempered steel and even glassware from Venice.

Trade and the development of trade-based Islamic states in the western sub-Saharan grasslands constitute a major chapter in Africa's history, but they are not the whole story of what was happening during the millennium 500–1500 C.E. in this richly diverse continent. East Africa, especially its coastal region from Somalia to Tanzania, was linked to a shipping network of monsoon-driven vessels that sailed throughout the Indian Ocean and its adjacent waters — all the way to China. Commodities such as ivory and gold made their way from the interior of East Africa to ports on the Indian Ocean, where they joined such coastal raw materials as ambergris (a resin used in the production of perfumes) and mangrove timber. At these emporia, which dotted the islands off the eastern coast, East Africa's goods were exchanged for pottery from China, glassware, and Indian textiles. In addition, captives taken in war and by raiding parties were brought to the coast, where they were sold to Arab slavers for exportation to the mines and plantations of Iraq. For better and for worse, Africa was increasingly becoming linked to the Eurasian World between 500 and 1500.

Africa

During the millennium from 500 to 1500 Africa witnessed a number of important historical developments. Chief among them were the last stages of the *Bantu Expansion*, the coming of Islam, the creation of trade empires in the western Sudan, the rise of a *Swahili* culture in East Africa, and the arrival of Europeans toward the end of this period.

The approximately 450 languages belonging to the *Bantu* linguistic family that are spoken today throughout most of the southern half of the continent are traceable to a common place of origin in West Africa, probably in present eastern Nigeria. Bantu speakers probably began spreading out of their ancestral homeland as early as three or four thousand years ago, aided by their skills in fishing and agriculture. In its later stages, this slow, almost imperceptible movement was aided by their iron-working skills. As they spread east and south, the Bantu-speaking peoples introduced wherever they settled the crafts of farming and iron metallurgy. By the early centuries C.E. Bantu speakers had pushed as far south as the region today occupied by the nation of Zimbabwe, where by the late thirteenth century they constructed a gold-trade civilization centered on the now famous Great Zimbabwe stone citadel, from which the modern state took its name in 1979.

Another great migration that profoundly influenced Africa's history was the influx of Islam in the wake of the conquering Arab armies that swept through North Africa in the seventh century. These conquests and the conversions that followed transformed what had been Christian North Africa into an integral part of the Islamic World, thereby wrenching it out of the orbits of Constantinople and Rome and tying it culturally to Mecca, Damascus, and Baghdad.

From North Africa the faith and culture of Islam penetrated into the trade empires of the western grassland states south of the Sahara after 1000 C.E. The empires of *Ghana*, *Mali*, and *Songhai* became progressively more Islamic and, therefore, more closely tied to North Africa and the greater Islamic World beyond Africa by reason of a shared religious culture, as well as by commercial interests.

On the east coast of Africa a similar phenomenon was at work. In the ninth and tenth centuries Arab sailor-merchants established trading settlements far down the coast of East Africa. The culture that emerged from the interchange between the Arabic and East African peoples who traded and intermarried here is known as *Swahili* (from the Arabic word for "coast" — *sabil*). Like *Kiswahili*, the language of the region, Swahili culture was a coastal trade culture consisting of an indigenous Bantu base with strong Arabic influences. From about 1200 to the early sixteenth century, the port city of *Kilwa*, today located in the nation of Tanzania, served as the Swahili coast's main emporium.

Kilwa's commercial prominence along Africa's eastern shore ended with its sack and destruction by the Portuguese in 1505. With the arrival in force of the

Portuguese, first on Africa's west coast in the fifteenth century and then on the east coast in the early sixteenth century, the age of direct European contact with sub-Saharan Africa had begun, with all of the consequences that would follow from that interchange.

Despite the impact of Islam and Europe on Africa south of the Sahara, older ways of life proved usually resilient to influences from outside. *Ethiopia*, for example, successfully resisted Islamic and later Portuguese attempts at conquest and conversion, retaining its autonomy and ancient Christian culture. Likewise, the coastal states of West Africa retained their core cultural features, even as their leaders accepted the faith of Islam. Moreover, they maintained autonomy, extensive political authority, and widespread economic interests, even in the face of the European presence along their coastline.

The Land of Zanj: Tenth-Century East Africa



93 ▼ *Abu'l-Hasan Ali al-Mas'udi*, *MEADOWS OF GOLD*

To ancient Greek and Roman geographers, the coastal region of eastern Africa was known as *Azania*. The Arabs who traded along this coast knew it as the *Land of Zanj*, a name that survives in *Zanzibar*, an island that comprises part of the modern nation of Tanzania. Following the monsoon winds of the Indian Ocean, which blow toward East Africa between November and March, Arab merchants sailed from Oman and other regions of the Arabian Peninsula and visited trading ports that stretched southward from Mogadishu in Somalia to Sofala, which is located in the modern nation of Mozambique. At these trading centers, the Arabs met sailors from India and the islands of Southeast Asia, as well as colonists from Arabia and Persia, many of whom had intermarried with Africans. Because of the presence of Arabic speakers along this coast, the Arab merchants who visited the region found little difficulty in conducting commerce, apart from the normal hazards of venturing long distances across treacherous ocean waters in small vessels. After acquiring their desired raw materials, Arab merchants returned home or else sailed to India, driven by monsoon winds that blow northeastward between April and October.

One of the earliest Arabic accounts of East African society and its trade comes from the pen of Abu'l-Hasan Ali al-Mas'udi (ca. 890–956), who visited the region in 915/916. In his masterwork of history and geography, *Meadows of Gold*, which he composed in 943, al-Mas'udi informs his reader of the Indian Ocean trade network into which the Land of Zanj was interwoven and of the people of interior East Africa, who fed that trade. How much of what he tells us about the people of Zanj is fact and how much is the stuff of distorted legend is open to question. What is clear and undisputed is the picture that al-Mas'udi draws of the importance of Africa's east coast to foreign merchants.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. What evidence does al-Mas'udi provide of the evolving Swahili culture of this region?
2. What are the dangers of the voyage to the Land of Zanj? What are the rewards?
3. Describe the ivory trade that originated in East Africa.
4. What does al-Mas'udi tell us about the culture of the Bantu people of the interior? Which elements seem the most believable? Why? Which seem the least believable? Why?
5. Review the story of Sinbad (Chapter 9, source 78). Does al-Mas'udi's account place the story into a clearer context? If so, what is that context?

The pilots of Oman¹ pass by the channel [of Berbera] to reach the island of Kanbalu,² which is in the Zanj sea.³ It has a mixed population of Muslims and Zanj idolaters.⁴ . . . The aforesaid Kanbalu is the farthest point of their voyages on the Zanj sea, and the land of Sofala and the Waqwaq,⁵ on the edge of the Zanj mainland and at the end of this branch of the sea. The people of Siraf⁶ also make this voyage, and I myself have sailed on this sea, setting off from Sanjar, the capital of Oman, in company with a number of Omani shipowners, among whom were Muhammad ibn al-Zaidbud and Jawhar ibn Ahmad surnamed Ibn Sirah, who was later lost at sea with his ship. My last voyage from Kanbalu to Oman was in A.H. 304⁷ on the ship belonging to Ahmad and Abd al-Samad, who were the brothers of Abd al-Rahim ibn Ja'far al-Sirafi, a native of Mikan,

which is a quarter of Siraf. They were both lost at sea with all their goods later on. The Amir⁸ of Oman at the time of my last voyage was Ahmad ibn Hilal, son of a sister of al-Qital. I have sailed much on the seas, . . . but I do not know of one more dangerous than that of the Zanj, of which I have just spoken. . . .

The land of Zanj produces wild leopard skins. The people wear them as clothes, or export them to Muslim countries. They are the largest leopard skins and the most beautiful for making saddles. The sea of Zanj and that of Abyssinia⁹ lie on the right of the sea of India, and join up. They also export tortoise-shell for making combs, for which ivory is likewise used. . . . As we have said, the Zanj and other Abyssinian peoples are spread about on the right bank of the Nile,¹⁰ as far as the end of the Abyssinian sea. The Zanj

¹The region of southeast Arabia that stretches along the entrance to the Persian Gulf.

²The island of Pemba.

³The region of the Indian Ocean that washes the central portion of Africa's eastern coast.

⁴Worshippers of idols. People who follow traditional religions.

⁵Arabs normally used this term to refer only to the people of Malaysia, who speak a language that is related to the Malagasy tongue of Madagascar. Madagascar is a large island off the coast of East Africa and opposite Sofala; Malaysia is across the Indian Ocean in Southeast Asia (see note 19). In the present context, however, the term seems to refer to the people of interior Africa.

⁶A port on the Iranian shore of the Persian Gulf.

⁷A.H. is an abbreviation for a Latin term that translates as *in the year of the Hijra*. Muhammad's *hijra* from Mecca to Medina, which began on July 16, 622, is the starting point of the Islamic calendar. Because the Islamic year is lunar, one cannot simply subtract 622 years from a date in the common calendar to arrive at its equivalent in the Islamic calendar. A.H. 304 equates to 915/916 C.E.

⁸An Arabic term that means "commander." Here it means "prince" or "governor."

⁹Usually the term refers only to the land of Ethiopia, but al-Mas'udi seems to use it here to refer to a substantial portion of the northeastern coast of Africa (see note 11).

¹⁰Not the Nile. Maybe he means the Sabi River, which flows out of the Zimbabwe Plateau and reaches the ocean in the modern state of Mozambique.

are the only Abyssinian people¹¹ to have crossed the branch which flows out of the upper stream of the Nile into the sea of Zanj. They settled in that area, which stretches as far as Sofala, which is the farthest limit of land and the end of the voyages made from Oman and Siraf on the sea of Zanj. In the same way that the sea of China ends with the land of Japan, the sea of Zanj ends with the land of Sofala and the Waqwaq, which produces gold and many other wonderful things. It has a warm climate and is fertile. The Zanj capital is there¹² and they have a king called the *Mfalme*. This is the ancient name of their kings, and all the other Zanj kings are subject to him: he has 300,000 horsemen. The Zanj use the ox as a beast of burden, for they have no horses, mules or camels in their land, and do not know of their existence. Like all Abyssinians they do not know of snow or hail. Some of their tribes sharpen their teeth and are cannibals. The land of Zanj begins with the branch which leaves the upper Nile¹³ and continues to the land of Sofala and Waqwaq. The villages stretch for 700 parasangs¹⁴ and the same distance inland: the country is cut up into valleys, mountains and stony deserts. There are many wild elephants but no tame ones. The Zanj do not use them for war or anything else, but only hunt and kill them. When they want to catch them, they throw down the leaves, bark and branches of a certain tree which grows in their country: then they wait in ambush until the elephants come to drink. The water burns them and makes them drunk. They fall down and cannot get up: their limbs will not articulate. The Zanj rush upon them armed with very

long spears, and kill them for their ivory. It is from this country that come tusks weighing fifty pounds and more. They usually go to Oman, and from there are sent to China and India. This is the chief trade route, and if it were not so, ivory would be common in Muslim lands.

In China the kings and military civil officers use ivory palanquins:¹⁵ no officer or notable dares to come into the royal presence in an iron palanquin, and ivory alone can be used. Thus they seek after straight tusks in preference to the curved, to make the things we have spoken of. They also burn ivory before their idols and cense their altars with it, just as Christians use the Mary incense¹⁶ and other perfumes. The Chinese make no other use of the elephant, and consider it unlucky to use it for domestic purposes or war. This fear has its origin in a tradition about one of their most ancient military expeditions. In India ivory is much sought after.¹⁷ It is used for the handles of daggers called *barari* or *barri* in the singular: and also for the curved sword-scabbards called *kartal*, in the plural *karatil*, but the chief use of ivory is making chessmen and backgammon pieces. . . .

In the land of Zanj the elephant lives about 400 years, according to what the people say, and they speak with certainty of having met an elephant so tall that it was impossible to kill it. . . . It is only in the land of Zanj and in India that elephants reproduce. . . .

Now let us return to our subject of the beginning of the chapter, the Zanj, the description of their country and of the other peoples of Abyssinia. The Zanj, although always busied

¹¹Apparently all dark-skinned Africans are Abyssinians (see note 9).

¹²Probably the site, far up the Sabi River Valley, where the Shona state would construct the massive enclosures of Great Zimbabwe between 1200 and 1450.

¹³Al-Mas'udi is wrong again (see note 10). Several major rivers run into the Indian Ocean, but not one of them is the Nile. This river, which delineates the northern boundary of the Land of Zanj, might be the Juba River.

¹⁴A *parasang*, an ancient Persian unit of measurement, is three and one-half miles.

¹⁵A covered litter carried on the shoulders of two or four persons.

¹⁶Incense (also known as *frankincense*) was a fragrant resin from Yemen in the southern Arabian Peninsula that Christians, Muslims, Jews, Zoroastrians, and many others burned in their places of worship. Here the author seems to refer to a particular grade of incense that was burned in Christian churches in honor of Mary, the mother of Jesus.

¹⁷Despite the presence of elephants in India, Indian artisans preferred African ivory because of its texture and size.

hunting the elephant and collecting its ivory, make no use of it for domestic purposes. They use iron instead of gold and silver, just as they use oxen, as we said before, both for beasts of burden and for war. These oxen are harnessed like a horse and run as fast. . . .

To go back to the Zanj and their kings, these are known as *Wafalme*,¹⁸ which means son of the Great Lord, since he is chosen to govern them justly. If he is tyrannical or strays from the truth, they kill him and exclude his seed from the throne; for they consider that in acting wrongfully he forfeits his position as the son of the Lord, the King of Heaven and Earth. They call God *Maliknajlu*, which means Great Lord.

The Zanj have an elegant language and men who preach in it. One of their holy men will often gather a crowd and exhort his hearers to please God in their lives and to be obedient to him. He explains the punishments that follow upon dis-

obedience, and reminds them of their ancestors and kings of old. These people have no religious law: their kings rule by custom and by political expediency.

The Zanj eat bananas,¹⁹ which are as common among them as they are in India; but their staple food is millet²⁰ and a plant called *kalari* which is pulled out of the earth like truffles. It is plentiful in Aden²¹ and the neighboring part of Yemen²² near to the town. It is like the cucumber of Egypt and Syria. They also eat honey and meat. Every man worships what he pleases, be it a plant, an animal or a mineral. They have many islands where the coconut grows: its nuts are used as fruit by all the Zanj peoples. One of these islands, which is one or two days' sail from the coast, has a Muslim population and a royal family. This is the island of Kanbalu of which we have already spoken.

¹⁸ Apparently these are the kings mentioned above who are subordinate to the *Mfalme*.

¹⁹ Migrants from Malaysia in Southeast Asia settled in Madagascar around the first century C.E. (see note 5) and brought with them plants and seeds from their homeland, including the banana. From Madagascar the banana traveled into

the tropical rain forests of continental Africa, where it flourished as a domesticated crop.

²⁰ A cereal.

²¹ An Arabian port city that commands the entrance to the Red Sea.

²² Southwest Arabia

The Land of Ghana: Eleventh-Century Western Sudan



94 ▼ *Abu Ubaydallah al-Bakri,*

THE BOOK OF ROUTES AND REALMS

Located south of the Sahara Desert is a broad expanse of grasslands, or *savanna*, that stretches across the breadth of the African continent from the Atlantic Ocean to the Red Sea. To the Arabs this region was known as *Bilad al-Sudan* (the country of the blacks). Arab and Berber merchants were especially interested in West Africa's Sudan because its inhabitants were advantageously located between the markets of North Africa and cultures farther south toward the tropical rain forests of the coast. From the southern peoples of the Niger and Senegal river valleys the inhabitants of the savanna obtained gold and slaves, which they traded for manufactured goods, horses, and salt with Berber and Arab merchants, who arrived in camel caravans from the north. Over time, this trans-Saharan commerce

stimulated development of a series of large trading states in the region that connected West Africa's gold fields with the cities of Mediterranean North Africa.

One of the earliest important trading empires to emerge was *Ghana* (not to be confused with its modern namesake, the nation of Ghana), which was located essentially in territory encompassed today by the nations of Mauritania and Mali. The origins of Ghana as an organized entity are lost in the shadows of the past but go back at least as far as the fifth century C.E., when the introduction of the *dromedary*, or single-humped Arabian camel, made it easier for outsiders to penetrate across the Sahara into the land of the *Soninke* people. Coming as traders and as raiders, the nomadic *Berber* people of the western Sahara apparently helped stimulate the formation of a Soninke kingdom organized for commerce and defense. Eventually that kingdom became known as *Ghana* — a term that originated as a royal title. During the course of the eighth and ninth centuries Arab merchants inhabiting the coastal cities of North Africa began to enter the lucrative trans-Saharan trading system, thereby gaining direct access to the region they called *the land of gold* — a land now dominated by the well-established state of Ghana.

In 1067/1068 Abu Ubaydallah al-Bakri (d. 1094), a resident of the city of Cordova in what is today Spain but was then the Muslim land of *al-Andalus*, composed a detailed description of this fabled region. Although he never traveled to nearby Africa and probably never even left his native land, al-Bakri provides us with one of the most important sources for the early history of the western Sudan. As was the accepted practice among Islamic geographers of his era, al-Bakri drew heavily from the writings of predecessors, many of whose works are now otherwise lost, and he also interviewed merchants who had traveled to the area. These interviews made it possible for al-Bakri to present up-to-date information on Ghana at a crucial moment in its history.

During the latter portion of the eleventh century the rulers and leading families of Ghana were increasingly adopting the faith and attendant culture of Islam. However, Muslims from the north brought not only the peaceful message of universal submission to the Word of God, they also brought war. A fundamentalist Islamic group of Berbers known as the *Almoravids* waged holy war, or jihad, against the Soninke of Ghana. It is unclear whether or not the Almoravids prevailed in this war, but apparently the conflict disrupted trade and weakened Ghana's economic base. In addition, the heartland of Ghana was becoming far less able to support its population due to an environmental crisis brought about by overfarming and excessive grazing. Large numbers of farmers and townspeople were forced to move away. With these combined losses, the recently converted monarchs of Ghana lost their ability to hold together their loosely organized and still predominantly non-Islamic empire. By the early thirteenth century Ghana had disintegrated. Hegemony over the markets of the western Sudan briefly passed to the kingdom of *Sosso* and then to the state of *Mali*, which reached its greatest territorial extent under Mansa Musa (r. 1312–1327), whom we saw in Chapter 8 (source 62). We shall see Mali again in Chapter 2 (Vol. B).

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. To whom did a monarch pass his royal power? What does this tradition of royal succession suggest about Ghanaian society?
2. Describe the city of Ghana. What does its physical environment, especially its two centers, suggest about eleventh-century Ghanaian culture?
3. How do we know that the empire of Ghana was not the only state in the western Sudan?
4. How would you characterize the authority and sources of power of the rulers of Ghana?
5. What role did Islam play in Ghanaian society? What does your answer suggest about the way in which Islam entered the western Sudan?
6. What does the story of the conversion of the king of Malal suggest about the process of Islamization in the western Sudan?

Ghana is a title given to their kings; the name of the region is Awkar, and their king today, namely in the year 460,¹ is Tunka Manin. He ascended the throne in 455.² The name of his predecessor was Basi and he became their ruler at the age of 85. He led a praiseworthy life on account of his love of justice and friendship for the Muslims. At the end of his life he became blind, but he concealed this from his subjects and pretended that he could see. When something was put before him he said: "This is good" or "This is bad." His ministers deceived the people by indicating to the king in cryptic words what he should say, so that the commoners could not understand. Basi was a maternal uncle of Tunka Manin. This is their custom and their habit, that the kingship is inherited only by the son of the king's sister. He has no doubt that his successor is a son of his sister, while he is not certain that his son is in fact his own, and he is not convinced of the genuineness of his relationship to him. This Tunka Manin is powerful, rules an enormous kingdom, and possesses great authority.

The city of Ghana consists of two towns situated on a plain.³ One of these towns, which is inhabited by Muslims, is large and possesses twelve mosques, in one of which they assemble for the Friday prayer. There are salaried imams and muezzins,⁴ as well as jurists and scholars. In the environs are wells with sweet water, from which they drink and with which they grow vegetables. The king's town is six miles distant from this one and bears the name of Al-Ghaba.⁵ Between these two towns there are continuous habitations. The houses of the inhabitants are of stone and acacia wood. The king has a palace and a number of domed dwellings all surrounded with an enclosure like a city wall. In the king's town, and not far from his court of justice, is a mosque where the Muslims who arrive at his court pray. Around the king's town are domed buildings and groves and thickets where the sorcerers of these people, men in charge of the religious cult, live. In them too are their idols and the tombs of their kings. These woods are guarded and none may enter them and know

¹1067/1068 C.E. (see source 93, note 7).

²1063 C.E.

³The city consisted of two separate walled towns connected by a long, unwallled strip of private dwellings. Known as *Koumbi-Saleh*, its ruins are located in the southern region of the modern nation of Mauritania. At its eleventh-century height, this double city probably held some twenty thousand people.

⁴*Imams* are religious teachers and prayer leaders; *muezzins* are the chanters who ascend the minarets, or towers, of the mosques and call the faithful to prayer five times daily.

⁵The term means *the forest*, and refers to the sacred grove mentioned below. (For more on sacred groves, see source 96.)

what is there. In them also are the king's prisons. If somebody is imprisoned there no news of him is ever heard. The king's interpreters, the official in charge of his treasury and the majority of his ministers are Muslims. Among the people who follow the king's religion⁶ only he and his heir apparent (who is the son of his sister) may wear sewn clothes. All other people wear robes of cotton, silk, or brocade, according to their means. All of them shave their beards, and women shave their heads. The king adorns himself like a woman, wearing necklaces round his neck and bracelets on his forearms, and he puts on a high cap decorated with gold and wrapped in a turban of fine cotton. He sits in audience or to hear grievances against officials in a domed pavilion around which stand ten horses covered with gold-embroidered materials. Behind the king stand ten pages holding shields and swords decorated with gold, and on his right are the sons of the vassal kings⁷ of his country wearing splendid garments and their hair plaited with gold. The governor of the city sits on the ground before the king and around him are ministers seated likewise. . . . When people who profess the same religion as the king approach him they fall on their knees and sprinkle dust on their heads, for this is their way of greeting him. As for the Muslims, they greet him only by clapping their hands.

Their religion is paganism and the worship of idols. When their king dies they construct over the place where his tomb will be an enormous dome of wood. Then they bring him on a bed covered with a few carpets and cushions and place him beside the dome. At his side they place his ornaments, his weapons, and the vessels from which he used to eat and drink, filled with various kinds of food and beverages. They place there

too the men who used to serve his meals. They close the door of the dome and cover it with mats and furnishings. Then the people assemble, who heap earth upon it until it becomes like a big hillock and dig a ditch around it until the mound can be reached at only one place.

They make sacrifices to their dead and make offerings of intoxicating drinks.

On every donkey-load of salt when it is brought into the country their king levies one golden dinar,⁸ and two dinars when it is sent out. From a load of copper the king's due is five mithqals,⁹ and from a load of other goods ten mithqals. The best gold found in his land comes from the town of Ghiyaru, which is eighteen days' traveling distant from the king's town over a country inhabited by tribes of the Sudan whose dwellings are continuous.

The nuggets found in all the mines of his country are reserved for the king, only this gold dust being left for the people. But for this the people would accumulate gold until it lost its value. The nuggets may weigh from an ounce to a pound. It is related that the king owns a nugget as large as a big stone. . . .

The king of Ghana, when he calls up his army, can put 200,000 men¹⁰ into the field, more than 40,000 of them archers. . . .

On the opposite bank of the Nil¹¹ is another great kingdom, stretching a distance of more than eight days' marching, the king of which has the title of *Daw*. The inhabitants of this region use arrows when fighting. Beyond this country lies another called Malal,¹² the king of which is known as *al-musulmani*.¹³ He is thus called because his country became afflicted with drought one year following another; the inhabitants prayed for rain, sacrificing cattle till they had exterminated almost all of them, but the

⁶The king, who was not a Muslim, followed the ancient religious ways of the Soninke people.

⁷Subordinate kings, or lords.

⁸A standard gold coin in the Islamic World that weighed 4.72 grams, or one *mithqal* (see note 9).

⁹A standard of weight equaling 4.72 grams.

¹⁰An apparent exaggeration. There was no regular stand-

ing Ghanaian army; the various districts of the empire sent warriors as the occasion warranted.

¹¹Islamic geographers of this era mistakenly believed that the Niger River was the western source of the Nile.

¹²A *Mandike* kingdom that probably was the nucleus of the later empire of Mali.

¹³"The Muslim."

drought and the misery only increased. The king had as his guest a Muslim who used to read the Qur'an and was acquainted with the Sunna.¹⁴ To this man the king complained of the calamities that assailed him and his people. The man said: "O King, if you believed in God (who is exalted) and testified that He is One, and testified as to the prophetic mission of Muhammad (God bless him and give him peace) and if you accepted all the religious laws of Islam, I would pray for your deliverance from your plight and that God's mercy would envelop all the people of your country and that your enemies and adversaries might envy you on that account." Thus he continued to press the king until the latter accepted Islam and became a sincere Muslim. The man made him recite from the Qur'an some easy passages and taught him religious obligations and practices which no one may be excused from know-

ing. Then the Muslim made him wait till the eve of the following Friday,¹⁵ when he ordered him to purify himself by a complete ablution, and clothed him in a cotton garment which he had. The two of them came out towards a mound of earth, and there the Muslim stood praying while the king, standing at his right side, imitated him. Thus they prayed for a part of the night, the Muslim reciting invocations and the king saying "Amen." The dawn had just started to break when God caused abundant rain to descend upon them. So the king ordered the idols to be broken and expelled the sorcerers from his country. He and his descendants after him as well as his nobles were sincerely attached to Islam, while the common people of his kingdom remained polytheists. Since then their rulers have been given the title of *al-musulmani*.

¹⁴The traditions of Islam.

¹⁵The beginning of the Islamic day of rest and community worship.

The Land of Seyon: Fourteenth-Century Ethiopia



95 ▼ THE GLORIOUS VICTORIES OF 'AMDA SEYON

Ethiopia, a kingdom to the southeast of ancient Kush (or Nubia) in Africa's northeast highlands, looks out across the Red Sea to Yemen, the southwestern portion of the Arabian Peninsula. Settlers from Yemen crossed these waters, perhaps as early as the seventh century B.C.E., and mixed with the indigenous inhabitants to produce a hybrid civilization whose language, *Ge'ez*, was essentially Semitic but contained significant Kushitic elements. Because of its strategic location astride a trade route that linked Egypt and the Mediterranean World with the markets of East Africa, Arabia, and India, Ethiopia flourished. A Greek shipping manual of the first century C.E. notes that Adulis, Ethiopia's port on the Red Sea, was northeast Africa's premier center for the ivory trade.

According to Ethiopian chronicles, in 333 King Ezana (r. 320–350) converted to Christianity and made it the official religion of his realm. In the years that followed the Ethiopian people gradually adopted the new faith. Like the Egyptians and Nubians to their north, the Ethiopians later adopted a type of Christian-

ity known as *Monophysitism* (from the Greek words for “one nature”). This form of Christian belief, which arose in the fifth century, centered on a doctrine that deemphasized Jesus’ humanity to the point of maintaining that he had a single, divine nature. When the Churches of Constantinople and Rome condemned Monophysite teachings as heresy in 451, the Ethiopian Church was doctrinally cut off from these two centers of Christianity. The Arab-Muslim conquest of Egypt in the 640s further cut Ethiopia off from its Christian coreligionists in Byzantium and the West. In time, most of previously Christian Egypt converted to Islam, although its native Christians, known as *Coptic Christians*, remained a significant minority, as they are today. Egypt, the land that had introduced Christianity to Nubia and Ethiopia, was now an Islamic stronghold. On their part, Nubians and Ethiopians vigorously fought to retain their political autonomy and Christian identity in the face of Islamic pressure from Egypt. After the mid thirteenth century, however, Nubian resistance to Islam weakened. By the mid fourteenth century Nubia no longer had an independent Christian monarchy, and the Christian faith was fast losing out to Islam. By the sixteenth century, Nubia’s Christian population was a minority and would remain so down to the present. (Nubia today is the nation of Sudan.)

Farther to the south, Ethiopia, fairly secure in its mountain strongholds, continued to hold out against Islam. The following document, composed by an eyewitness to the events, tells the story of how King ‘Amda Seyon I (r. 1314–1344), whose throne name was *Gabra Masqal* (servant of the cross), resisted an invasion in 1329 by Sabr ad-Din, the ruler of Ifat, a nearby Islamic principality. More than simply a monarch on the defensive, ‘Amda Seyon was a militant expansionist, who in his thirty-year reign undertook a series of offensive operations against neighboring Islamic states and achieved significant success at their expense. Between 1320 and 1340 he managed to bring Ifat and other Islamic states of the highland plateau under the control of his expanding kingdom. As the chronicle points out, Sabr ad-Din was actually a tributary prince who revolted against ‘Amda Seyon’s authority.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. What picture emerges of Muslim-Christian relations in fourteenth-century Ethiopia?
2. The Christian Ethiopian attitude toward Jews and Judaism has been characterized as ambivalent. Do you find in this source any evidence to support such a judgment? Please be specific in your answer.
3. Reread Eusebius of Caesarea’s *Ecclesiastical History* (Chapter 7, source 50). Do you see any parallels between the tone and message of that source and this document? What are they? What conclusions do you draw?

Let us write, with the help of our Lord Jesus Christ, of the power and the victory which God wrought by the hands of 'Amda Seyon king of Ethiopia, whose throne-name is Gabra Masqal. . . . Now the king of Ethiopia . . . heard that the king of the Rebels¹ had revolted, and in his arrogance was unfaithful to him, making himself great, like the Devil who set himself above his creator and exalted himself like the Most High. The king of the Rebels, whose name was Sabradin, was full of arrogance towards his lord 'Amda Seyon, and said, "I will be king over all the land of Ethiopia; I will rule the Christians according to my law, and I will destroy their churches." And having said this, he arose and set out and came to the land of the Christians, and killed some of them; and those who survived, both men and women, he took prisoner and converted them to his religion.

And after this he said, "I will nominate governors over the provinces of Ethiopia." . . . And he appointed governors over all the provinces of Ethiopia, even those which he had not been able to reach.

But the feet cannot become the head, nor the earth the sky, nor the servant the master. That perverse one, the son of a viper, of the seed of a serpent, the son of a stranger from the race of Satan, thought covetously of the throne of David² and said, "I will rule in Seyon,"³ for pride entered into his heart, as into the Devil his father. He said, "I will make the Christian churches into mosques for the Muslims, and I will convert to my religion the king of the Christians together with his people, and I will nominate him governor of one province, and if he refuses to be converted to my religion I will deliver him to the

herdsmen . . . that they make him a herder of camels. As for the queen Zan Mangesa, the wife of the king, I will make her work at the mill." . . .

Saying this, he collected all the troops of the Muslims, and chose from among them the ablest and most intelligent. These in truth were not able and intelligent, but fools, men full of error, impostors who foretell the future by means of sand and take omens from the sun and moon and stars of heaven, who say, "We observe the stars," but they have knowledge only of evil, they have no knowledge of God, their knowledge is of men which fades and perishes, for as Saint Paul says, "God hath made foolish the wisdom of this world."⁴

Let us return to the original subject. This evil man then questioned the diviners, saying, "Now tell me, I pray you, shall we conquer when we fight with the king of the Christians?" And one of them rose, a prophet of darkness. . . .

When Sabradin the king of the Rebels examined him, this diviner answered him persuasively, saying, "Behold, the kingdom of the Christians is finished; it shall be given to us, and you shall reign in Seyon. Rise, make war on the king of the Christians, and conquering you shall rule him and his people." And all the diviners said likewise. So the Rebel king sent into all the lands of the Muslims and called together his troops, and formed them into three divisions: one division set out for the land of Amhara, another set out for the land of Angot, and he himself prepared for war and set out to invade Shoa where the king was, — the slave of slaves against the prince of princes, the tail of the dog against the head of the lion, trusting in the false prediction that the Christian kingdom was come to an end.

¹The word *'elwan*, translated here as "Rebels," can also be translated as "infidels," or nonbelievers.

²The Ethiopian royal family, known as the *Solomonid Dynasty* (1270–1974), claimed descent from the union of the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon of Israel (r. ca. 962–922 B.C.E.), son of King David. See the Bible, 1 Kings, 10:1–13, and 2 Chronicles, 9:1–12, for an account of the queen's visit to King Solomon. According to Ethiopian tradition, *Menelik*, son of the Queen of Sheba and Solomon

and first king of Ethiopia, brought the Ark of the Covenant to Ethiopia, where it is still revered as the country's most sacred relic.

³The Ge'ez transliteration of *Zion*, one of Jerusalem's hills and a common symbolic term for Jerusalem and even the entire Holy Land. Here *Seyon* refers to Ethiopia because the Ethiopians claim partial Hebraic descent (note 2). 'Amda Seyon means *pillar of Zion*.

⁴The Bible, 1 Corinthians, 1:20.

As for us, we have heard and we know from the Holy Scriptures that the kingdom of the Muslims, established for but seven hundred years, shall cease to be at the proper time. But the kingdom of the Christians shall continue till the second coming of the Son of God, according to the words of Holy Scripture; and above all we know that the kingdom of Ethiopia shall endure till the coming of Christ, of which David prophesied saying "Ethiopia shall stretch her hands unto God."⁵

The messengers whom the king had sent to that Rebel returned to him the whole answer of the renegade, that rebel against righteousness. Hearing the insults of the evil man, the king called together his commanders. . . . He sent them forth to war against the evil Sabradin on the 24th day of Yakatit,⁶ saying to them, "May God give you strength and victory, and may He help you." . . . And they fought with him and forced him out of his residence; and he fled before them. And they defeated him through the power of God. . . . And they pursued him till sunset; but he escaped them, going by a different road. God threw him down from his glory. . . .

Then the army of the king set forth and attacked the camp of the Rebel. They looted the rebel king's treasure houses and took gold and silver and fine clothes and jewels without number. They killed men and women, old men and children; the corpses of the slain filled a large space. And those who survived were made prisoners, and there were left none but those who had escaped with that evil man. But the soldiers could not find a place to camp because of the foul smell of the corpses; and they went to another place and made their camp there. . . .

The king, hearing that the Rebel had escaped, went into the tabernacle⁷ and approached the altar; seizing the horns of the altar⁸ he implored mercy of Jesus Christ saying, "Hear the petition of my heart and reject not the prayer of my lips, and shut not the gates of Thy mercy because of my sins, but send me Thy good angel to guide me on my road to pursue mine enemy who has set himself above Thy sheep and above Thy holy name." And having said this, he gave an offering to the church of colored hangings for the altar, and went out. Then he sent other troops, . . . cavalry and foot-soldiers, strong and skilled in war, powerful without comparison in warfare and battle; he sent their commander . . . to make war in the land of the renegades who are like Jews, the crucifiers,⁹ . . . Because like the Jews, the crucifiers, they denied Christ, he sent troops to destroy and devastate them and subject them to the rule of Christ. . . .

The Rebel was filled with fear, and not knowing where to turn, for fear had taken possession of him, he sent to the queen¹⁰ saying, "I have done wrong to my lord the king, I have wrought injustice against him, and it is better that I fall into his hands than into the hands of a stranger. I will come myself and surrender to him, that he may do what he will to me." Thereupon the queen went to tell the king the whole of the message from that Rebel Sabradin, whose acts, like his name 'broken judgment,'¹¹ consist of insults, mad rage, errors, contentions, and arrogance. When the king heard this message which the Rebel had sent to the queen, he was exceedingly angry, and said to the queen, "Do you send him a message and say: 'If you come, or if you do not come, it will not trouble me; but if you go to a distant country I will pursue you through

⁵The Bible, Psalms, 68:31.

⁶February 18, 1329.

⁷A tent used as a chapel in the king's camp.

⁸As was the fashion in ancient Israel, Ethiopian altars had horns on all four corners. Suppliants would grasp one while praying.

⁹The *Falashas*, or Ethiopian Jews, are Kushitic people whose ancestors had intermarried with Jewish immigrants from

Yemen. They are termed *crucifiers* here because of the notion that the Jews were responsible for Jesus' crucifixion.

¹⁰Queen Mangesa, wife of King 'Amda Seyon.

¹¹A pun. In Ge'ez *sabara* means "break" and *dayn* means "judgment." Actually, the Arabic name Sabr ad-Din means "constant in the faith."

the power of God. And if you go into a cave, or if you just run away, I will not leave you alone nor will I return to my capital till I have taken you.’”

Now when he received this message, Sabradin set out and came to the king, and stood before him. And the king asked him, saying, “Why have you behaved thus to me? The gifts which you formerly sent to me you have given to your servants; and the multitude of goods of silver and gold which I gave to the poor you have taken away. Those who traded with me you have bound in chains; and what is worse, you have aspired to the throne of my kingdom, in imitation of the Devil your father who wished to be the equal of his creator.” When that Rebel heard these words of the king he was at a loss for an answer in the greatness of his fear, for he was afraid of the king’s presence; and he answered, “Do with me according to your will.” And immediately the soldiers who were on the left and right of the king stood forth in anger and said, “This man is not worthy of life, for he has burnt the churches of God, he has slain Christians, and those whom he did not

kill he has compelled to accept his religion. Moreover he desired to ascend the high mountain of the kingdom.” And some said, “Let us slay him with the edge of the sword”; others said, “Let us stone him to death”; and others again, “Let us burn him with fire that he may disappear from the earth.” And they said to the king, “Think not, O king, that he comes to you honestly and freely, for he trusts in his magic art.” And so saying, they lifted from his bosom and arm a talisman and revealed the form of his magic. Then said the king, “Can your talismans deliver you from my hands in which God has imprisoned you?” And he gave orders for his two hands to be bound with iron chains; he did not wish him to be killed, for he is merciful and forbearing. Thus was taken the Rebel in the net which he himself had woven, and in the snare which he himself had set. . . . After this the king sent news to the capital of his kingdom. . . . “There is good news for you: with the help of your prayers I have defeated my enemy who is also the enemy of Christ.”

A Yoruba Woman of Authority?



96 ▼ SEATED FEMALE FIGURE

Like the Ethiopians, the *Yoruba*-speaking peoples of West Africa, who inhabit the forestlands that stretch from the edge of the savanna to the coast, trace their ancestry back to Southwest Asia, specifically Mecca. Such oral traditions are suspect as historical evidence and probably arose from a desire on the part of people converted to Islam well after 1200 to create for themselves an Arabic lineage. Whatever their origins, by the late fourteenth century the Yoruba people had established a number of independent kingdoms in a region encompassed today by the nations of Nigeria and Benin. One of the most important of these Yoruba kingdoms was *Oyo*. Although it reached its apogee as a regional power in the period 1600–1830, *Oyo*’s foundations as a city-state go back much earlier. Its first capital city, Old *Oyo*, located near the Niger River, was founded sometime between 800 and 1000.

The Yoruba of *Oyo* and elsewhere were great artists as well as state builders. The town of Esie in Nigeria is the site of a collection of over a thousand soapstone carvings of human figures that have lain for centuries in a grove (see source 94 for a description of Ghana’s sacred groves). Each carving is an individual portrait,



A Yoruba Woman of Authority?

and it seems reasonable to infer that each represents a prominent, probably deceased, individual. The sculptures date to somewhere between 1100 and 1500 and seem to have come from either Old Oyo or the equally powerful Yoruba city-state of *Ife*.

The sculpture pictured here is twenty-six inches high and represents a seated woman holding a cutlass that rests against her right shoulder. Note her elaborate hairstyle, whose height equals that of her face, the three-stringed necklace, and the scarification of her face. This arrangement of scars is found equally on male and female effigies in the collection. The figure probably represents an *Iyalode* (mother in charge of external affairs), an important officer among the Yoruba. Although the specific functions of *Iyalodes* differed from kingdom to kingdom and from era to era, it is clear that they enjoyed wide-ranging political, social, economic, and even military powers. Simply stated, the *Iyalode* was a chief in her own right and one of the monarch's main lieutenants.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. List and comment on all of the clues that lead us to infer that this figurine represents a woman of authority. What do you think each symbol of authority represents?
2. Compare this statue with the five statues in Chapter 5, source 41. What do all six statues have in common? What do those common characteristics suggest about the way in which authority is perceived and portrayed across cultures and time?

The Americas

The approximate date of the arrival of the first humans in the Americas is disputed, but new evidence strongly suggests that migrants from East Asia reached the Western Hemisphere much earlier than previously believed. Until recently the standard model was that America's first human inhabitants were hunters who crossed the Bering land bridge during the last glacial era around twelve thousand years ago. That theory has been seriously challenged by archeologists who have discovered unmistakable signs of early human habitation at Monte Verde in Chile and at Cactus Hill in Virginia. Artifacts from the former site have been reliably dated to at least around twelve and one-half thousand years ago, and in April 2000 scientists announced that the remains of the Cactus Hill site are somewhere between fifteen and seventeen thousand years old. How long it took the ancestors of the first inhabitants of Monte Verde and Cactus Hill to travel from Alaska to these locations remains a mystery — if, indeed, they crossed over into Alaska at all. One theory, which is increasingly gaining a respectful hearing, favors the view that many of the earliest migrants to the New World traveled from northeastern Asia in small boats, stopping at various locations along

the western shores of the Americas, and they began doing so well over twenty thousand years ago.

Whenever it began, the original peopling of the Americas was an epochal event (or series of events because it was probably achieved in successive waves of migration from East Asia) rivaled only in magnitude by the demographic shifts that took place following the arrival in force of Europeans and Africans after 1492. With the advent of European and African peoples and their diseases, the whole population structure of the Americas underwent massive changes.

During the many years that separated these two eras, the Americas witnessed a variety of other only slightly less monumental developments. One of the most consequential was the indigenous development of agriculture based on the cultivation of over one hundred different crops unknown to the peoples of Africa and Eurasia. Chief among these were *maize* (*corn* in American English), potatoes, tomatoes, peanuts, manioc, and various types of beans, peppers, and squashes. By the time the Europeans arrived, agriculture was practiced from the woodlands of eastern North America to the rain forests of the Amazon tropics. As elsewhere, agriculture imposed restrictions on the behavior and social patterns of the cultivators and also produced enough food in a sufficiently regular manner to allow for the growth of dense populations. One result was the rise of civilizations, first in Mexico and farther south in Meso- and South America and later in regions that are today part of the United States.

Three of the major civilizations of North America were the *Mississippian Mound Culture*, the *Hohokam*, and the *Anasazi*. Between 1050 and 1200 C.E. the Mississippian Mound Builders created the city of Cahokia at a site that today is in East St. Louis, Illinois. At its height, Cahokia supported a population of at least eleven thousand people and possibly as many as thirty thousand. The Hohokam (those who have vanished) of the Sonoran Desert produced a complex urban society based upon their ability to construct and maintain some three hundred miles of irrigation canals in the region of what is today Phoenix, Arizona. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the Anasazi (the ancient ones) of the Four Corners region of the American Southwest built cities in Chaco Canyon, New Mexico, and at Mesa Verde in Colorado, which today stand as silent testimony of their engineering skills. All three civilizations participated in widespread trade networks and were influenced by the earlier civilizations of Mexico. All three also passed away as urban cultures long before the arrival of Europeans, who could only marvel at the ruins they left behind.

Because they left no written records behind and abandoned their urban centers so long ago, these North American civilizations remain largely mysterious, despite the considerable work of archeologists over the past half century. The *Maya*, *Aztec*, and *Inca* peoples of farther south, however, were still identifiable cultures when European conquerors and missionaries arrived on the scene. Despite the best attempts of many Europeans to efface totally the presumed devilish cultures that they had discovered, the Maya, Aztec, and Inca civilizations would not be forgotten.

The sources that follow — the products of Amerindian and European crafters and authors — combine to shed light on four important American cultures that flourished between 500 and 1500.

The God Who Descended from the Mountains



97 ▼ A MOCHE CERAMIC

To most educated people pre-Columbian civilization in Peru is synonymous with the Inca culture of the Andean highlands. Actually, the Incas, whom the Spanish conquistadors met and conquered in the course of the sixteenth century C.E., were newcomers and only the most recent participants in what was already some two and one-half thousand years of Peruvian civilization. More than a thousand years before the rise of the Inca Empire, a people we call the *Moche*, or *Mochica*, constructed a highly developed civilization along the coastal desert plain of northern Peru. This region is one of the driest places on Earth, receiving an average of far less than an inch of annual rainfall. It is fed, however, by a number of rivers that rise in the towering Andes to the east and flow down to the Pacific Ocean. One of those rivers is the Rio Moche. The fertility of the Moche Valley allowed its inhabitants to carve out a powerful state and a distinctive civilization that was at the height of its creativity in the period 200–750.

Moche artisans perfected the craft of casting and alloying a variety of soft metals, allowing them to create some of the finest gold, silver, and copper artifacts ever produced in antiquity. The most distinctive and brilliant artistic products of this culture, however, were made from a humbler material — clay. The Moche people produced vast numbers of finely crafted ceramics — particularly effigy vessels that represented a wide variety of deities, humans, animals, plants, and structures — and large numbers of them have survived. More than 90 percent of all Moche art and craftwork uncovered by modern archeologists consists of these magnificent ceramics — all created without benefit of the potter's wheel.

No effigy pot, by itself, tells the historian much about Moche culture, but cumulatively they tell a compelling story of the daily lives, beliefs, and rituals of the people who created these earthenware masterpieces. Although a single example of Moche art might more easily confuse than illuminate, the artifact that appears here is an exception and provides some interesting insights into the Moche vision of the world.

This vessel — a water jug to be used possibly for only ceremonial purposes — is molded into a stylized mountain from which several deities emerge. In the center is a Moche god, who wears a sunrise headdress from which a snake's head projects, and he is flanked by two snakes. To his right (the viewer's left) is a were-jaguar, an individual possessing both jaguar and human characteristics (see Chapter 1, source 10). This individual, who seems to be a god (or a shaman who has taken on divine attributes), wears a living snake belt that curls beneath him so that he stands on the serpent's head.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. Note the cave from which the god in the center of the water jug emerges. What is his apparent relationship with the mountain?



Moche Effigy Pot

2. Consider this same god's headdress. What is the message? (Keep in mind the geographic relationship of the mountains to the Moche Valley.)
3. Does the geographic situation of the Moche Valley provide any clue as to what the four snakes that flow from the mountain represent?
4. Based on your answers to questions 1–3, what do you conclude this god's main functions were?

5. What about the feline qualities of the god/shaman on the far left (as you view the pot)? What does he seem to represent? In answering this question, you might want to refer back to Chapter 1, source 10.
6. Consider the title of this source. Which of the two deities was the “god who descended from the mountains”? Why do you reach this conclusion?
7. Which of these two gods seems more remote and lofty? Why? Which seems more active and closer to humanity? Why? Which of these is the creator-god? What are the apparent functions of the other god? Which deity was probably more loved and prayed to? Why?

Taino Culture



98 ▼ *Ramón Pane, A REPORT CONCERNING THE ANTIQUITIES OF THE INDIANS*

In the autumn of 1493 Christopher Columbus embarked on his second voyage to the West with a seventeen-ship flotilla and about twelve hundred sailors and colonists. One of the adventurers was a missionary priest named Ramón Pane, about whom we know very little, other than he was a native of the region of Catalonia and a member of the Hermits of Saint Jerome, a Spanish religious congregation noted for its strict asceticism. On arriving in the Caribbean, Pane went to live among the Tainos of Española (Hispaniola) in order to convert them to Catholic Christianity. In the course of his labors, Pane mastered the Taino language and listened to their sacred hymns and epic tales. On orders from Columbus, Pane prepared a detailed report of Taino religious beliefs and practices and presented it to the admiral, probably in 1498 when Columbus returned to the Americas for the third time.

Pane's report, the first systematic study of any Native-American culture by a European observer, is rich in detail and provides much information that would otherwise be lost to us. Unfortunately, the work went almost unnoticed by Pane's contemporaries, perhaps because most who read it had difficulty comprehending the sacred cosmology of the Tainos. Bartolomé de Las Casas, one of the most important sixteenth-century Spanish defenders of Amerindian rights, dismissed Pane as a simple-minded man whose description of Taino religious life was confused and of little worth. Happily, one person who did take the report seriously was Fernando Colón, Christopher Columbus's son, who included the whole text of Pane's study in his biography of his father, *History of the Admiral Christopher Columbus by His Son*. That history, however, was itself not taken seriously and remained unpublished at Fernando's death in 1539. In 1571 it was finally translated from Spanish into Italian and printed in Venice. While the translator seems to have done a reasonably good job on the biography, he had difficulty with the included report by Pane, as certain gaps in the translation indicate. To compound the problem, the original manuscript of Colón's work, along with Pane's original report, were lost about the same time that the translation was prepared. So far as

Pane's report was concerned, this meant that all that remained were the flawed Italian translation and several earlier brief summaries of the report, one of which was by the unsympathetic and somewhat confused Las Casas.

Despite these problems, Pane's report is a valuable text for modern historians and anthropologists. Research has revealed that far from being a simple-minded individual who wrote down a jumble of ill-understood stories, Pane was a careful student of Taino culture who probably managed not only to get the stories right but also maintained something of the original tone of the sacred stories and songs that he heard. As such, he gives us a fascinating glimpse into the Taino World as it existed for centuries prior to the arrival of the Spaniards.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. How did the Tainos remember and pass on their traditions?
2. What did they believe regarding the dead?
3. Who or what were *bobutis*, and what do the stories about them suggest about Taino culture? Please be specific in your answer.
4. Who or what were *cemis*, and what do the stories about them suggest about Taino culture? Please be specific in your answer.
5. Compare Pane's description of Taino culture with that of Columbus's letter of 1493 in the Prologue. Does Pane's report substantiate any of Columbus's observations? How, if at all, does Pane correct any of Columbus's observations?

The Relation of Fray¹ Ramón Concerning the Antiquities of the Indians, Which He, Knowing Their Language, Carefully Compiled by Order of the Admiral

I, Fray Ramón, a poor anchorite² of the Order of St. Jerome, write by order of the illustrious Lord Admiral, viceroy, and governor of the islands and mainland of the Indies what I have been able to learn concerning the beliefs and idolatry of the Indians, and the manner in which they worship their gods. Of these matters I shall give an account in the present treatise.

Each one adores the idols or *cemis*³ that he has in his house in some special way and with some special rites. They believe that there is an im-

mortal being in the sky whom none can see and who has a mother but no beginning. They call him Yocahu Vagua Maorocoti, and his mother Atabex, Yermaoguacar, Apito, and Zuimaco, which are five different names.⁴ I write only of the Indians of the island of Española, for I know nothing about the other islands and have never seen them. These Indians also know whence they came and where the sun and moon had their beginning, and how the sea was made, and of the place to which the dead go. They believe that the dead people appear on the roads to one who walks alone, but when many go together, the dead do not appear. All this they were taught by their forebears, for they cannot read or count above ten. . . .

¹*Fray* is Spanish for *Friar*, or "Brother" — a title accorded members of certain religious orders.

²A synonym for *hermit*.

³See the Prologue, note 15.

⁴The text is corrupted here, and the Italian translator provides only four names of the mother goddess. A summary of the Spanish text of Pane's report by the churchman Peter Martyr supplies the missing name: *Iiella*.

XII. *Their beliefs concerning the wanderings of the dead, of their appearance, and what they do.* They believe the dead go to a place called Coaybay, on one side of an island called Soraya. They say that the first to live there was one Maquetaurie Guayava, who was lord of Coaybay, home and dwelling place of the dead.

XIII. *Of the forms which they assign to the dead.* They say that during the day the dead live in seclusion, but at night walk about for recreation and eat of fruit called *guabaza*, which has the flavor of [the quince]⁵ and during the day is⁶ . . . but at night is changed into fruit; and they have festivities and keep company with the living. The Indians have this method of identifying dead people: They touch the belly of a person with the hand, and if they do not find a navel, they say that person is *operito*, which means dead; for they say that dead persons have no navels. Sometimes one who does not take this precaution and lies with a woman of Coaybay is mocked; for when he holds her in his arms, she suddenly disappears and his arms are empty. They still believe this. When a person is alive, they call his spirit *goeiz*; when he is dead, *opia*. They say that this *goeiz* appears to them often, now in the shape of a man, now of a woman. They say there was a man who wished to fight with a spirit; but when he closed with it, it disappeared, and the man flung his arms about a tree from whose branches he hung. All of them, young and old, believe this; they also believe that the spirits appear to them in the shape of their father, mother, brothers, relatives, or in some other shape. The fruit that they believe the dead eat is the size of a peach. The dead do not appear to them by day, but only by night, and therefore one who walks about at night feels great fear.

XIV. *Whence come these beliefs and why they persist in them.* There are certain men among them,

called *bobutís*, who practice great frauds upon the Indians, as shall be explained hereafter, to make them believe that they, the *bobutís*, speak with the dead and that they know all their deeds and secrets, and that when the Indians are ill they cure them. These deceptions I have seen with my own eyes, whereas the other things I told about I heard of only from others, especially from their principal men — because these men believe these fables more firmly than the others. Like the Moors,⁷ they have their religion set forth in ancient chants by which they are governed, as the Moors are by their Scripture.⁸ When they sing their chants, they play an instrument called *mayohavan* that is made of wood and is hollow, strong, yet very thin, an ell long and half as wide; the part which is played has the shape of a blacksmith's tongs, and the other end is like a club, so that it looks like a gourd with a long neck; this instrument is so sonorous that it can be heard a league and a half away.⁹ To its accompaniment they sing their chants, which they know by heart; and their principal men learn from infancy to play it and sing to it, according to their custom. Now I shall tell many other things concerning the ceremonies and customs of these heathen.

XV. *Of how the buhuitihus¹⁰ practice medicine, and what they teach the people, and of the deceptions they practice in their cures.* All the Indians of the island of Española have many different kinds of *cemis*. In some they keep the bones of their father, mother, relations, and forebears; these *cemis* are made of stone or wood. They have many of both kinds. There are some that speak, others that cause food plants to grow, others that bring rain, and others that make the winds blow. These simple, ignorant people, who know not our holy faith, believe that these idols or rather demons do all these things. When an Indian falls ill, they

⁵There is a gap in the Italian translation, but Peter Martyr's summary (note 4) provides the fruit — quince.

⁶Another gap in the Italian text.

⁷North African and Spanish Muslims.

⁸The Qur'an.

⁹About four and one-half miles.

¹⁰A variant of *bobutís* (Chapter XIV). The titles are used interchangeably throughout the Italian text. Peter Martyr's summary calls them *boitius*, and Las Casas variously records their title as *bohique* and *bebique*. Apparently, *bobuti(s)* is more correct and as close as we will ever get to the original Taino word for these shamans.

bring the *buhuitihu* to him. This doctor must observe a diet just like his patient and must assume the suffering expression of a sick man. He must also purge himself just as the sick man does, by snuffing a powder called *coboba*¹¹ up his nose. This produces such intoxication that they do not know what they are doing; and they say many senseless things, declaring that they are speaking with the *cemis* and that the latter are telling him the cause of the illness.

XVI. *What these buhuitihus do.* When a *buhuitihu* goes to call upon a patient, before leaving his hut he takes some soot from a cooking pot, or some charcoal, and blackens his face in order to make the sick man believe whatever he may say about his sickness; then he takes some small bones and a little meat, wraps the whole in something so it will not fall out, and puts it in his mouth. Meanwhile the patient has been purged in the manner described above. Entering the sick man's hut, the doctor sits down, and all fall silent; if there are any children in the hut, they are put out so they will not interfere with the *buhuitihu's* work; only one or two of the principal men remain. Then the *buhuitihu* takes some *güeyo* herb,¹² . . . wide, and another herb, wrapped in an onion leaf four inches long (but the *güeyo* herb is what they all generally use), and taking it between his hands, he mashes it into a pulp; and then he puts it into his mouth at night so as to vomit anything harmful that he may have eaten. Then he begins to sing his chant and, taking up a torch, drinks the juice of that herb. This done, he is quiet for a time; then he rises, goes toward the sick man, who lies alone in the middle of the hut, and walks about him twice or as many times as he thinks proper. Then he stands in front of him and takes him by the legs, feeling of his body from the thighs to the feet, after which he draws his hands away forcefully, as if pulling something out. Then he goes to the door, shuts it, and speaks to it, saying: "Begone to the mountain, or the sea, or where

you will"; then, after he has blown like one who blows chaff from his hand, he turns around, joins his hands together as if he were very cold, blows on his hands, and sucks in his breath as if sucking marrow from a bone, then sucks at the sick man's neck, or stomach, or shoulder, or cheeks, or the belly or some other part of the body. Having done this, he begins to cough and make a face as if he had eaten something bitter; then he spits into his hand the stone or bone or piece of meat that he put in his mouth at home or on the road. And if it is a piece of food, he tells the sick man, "You must know that you have eaten something that caused the sickness from which you suffer. See how I have taken it out of your body, where your *cemi* lodged it because you did not pray to him or build him a shrine or give him some land." If it is a stone, he says, "Take good care of it." Sometimes they believe these stones are good and help women in childbirth, and they take good care of them, wrapping them in cotton, placing them in small baskets, and putting food before them; they do the same with the *cemis* they have in their houses. On a holiday, when they have much food — fish, meat, or bread — they put some of each food in the house of the *cemi*, and next day they carry this food back to their huts after the *cemi* has eaten. But it would truly be a miracle if the *cemi* ate of that or anything else, for the *cemi* is a dead thing of stone or wood.

XVII. *How these physicians are sometimes paid back for their deceptions.* If the sick man should die in spite of having done all these things, and if he has many relations or one who is lord over a village and so can stand up to the *buhuitihu* or doctor (for men of small influence dare not contend with them), then those who wish to do the *buhuitihu* mischief do the following: First, in order to learn if the sick man died through the doctor's fault, or because he did not observe the diet that the doctor prescribed for him, these relations take an herb which is called *güeyo*, whose

¹¹A hallucinogenic snuff made from the crushed seeds of the piptadenia tree.

¹²Another gap in the Italian translation.

leaves resemble those of the sweet basil, being thick and long; this herb is also called *zacón*. They squeeze the juice from the leaf, then cut the dead man's nails and the hair above his forehead, pound the nails and hair to a powder between two stones, mix this powder with the juice of the herb, and pour the mixture between the dead man's lips to find out from him if the doctor was the cause of his death and whether he observed his diet. They ask this of him many times, until at last he speaks as distinctly as if he were alive and answers all their questions, saying that the *bubuitibu* did not observe the diet, or was the cause of his death. They say that the doctor asks him if he is alive, and that he can speak very clearly; he replies that he is dead. After they have learned from him what they want to know, they return him to the grave from which they took him. They perform this sorcery in still another way. They take the dead man and make a great fire like that used for making charcoal, and when the wood has turned to live coals, they throw the body into that fierce blaze; then they cover it with earth, as the charcoal-burner does the charcoal, and leave it there as long as they think advisable. Then they ask him the same question as above. The dead man replies that he knows nothing. This they ask of him ten times, and ten times he replies in the same way. Again they ask him if he is dead, but he will speak only those ten times.

XVIII. *How the dead man's relatives avenge themselves when they have had a reply through the sorcery of the potions.* The dead man's relations assemble on a certain day and lie in wait for the said *bubuitibu*, give him such a thrashing that they break his legs, arms, and head, and leave him for dead. At night, they say, there come many different kinds of snakes — white, black, green, and many other colors — that lick the face and whole body of the physician whom the Indians have left for dead. This they do two or three nights in succession; and presently, they say, the bones of his body knit together again and mend. And he rises and walks rather slowly to his home. Those who meet him on the road say, "Were you

not dead?" He replies that the *cemis* came to his aid in the shape of snakes. And the dead man's relations, very angry and desperate because they thought they had avenged the death of their kinsman, again try to lay hands on him; and if they catch him a second time, they pluck out his eyes and smash his testicles, for they say no amount of beating will kill one of these physicians if they do not first tear out his testicles.

How the dead man whom they have burned reveals what they wish to know, and how they take their vengeance. When they uncover the fire, the smoke rises until it is lost from sight, and when it leaves the furnace, it makes a chirping noise. Then it descends and enters the hut of the *bubuitibu* or doctor. If he did not observe the diet, he falls sick that very moment, is covered with sores, and his whole body peels. This they take for a sign that he did not observe his diet, and so they try to kill him in the manner described above. These are the sorceries they perform.

XIX. *How they make and keep their wooden or stone cemís.* They make the wooden *cemís* in this fashion. If a man walking along the way sees a tree moving its roots, he stops, filled with fear, and asks who it is. The tree replies, "Summon a *bubuitibu*, and he will tell you who I am." Then that man goes in search of a physician and tells him what he has seen. The sorcerer or warlock immediately runs toward that tree, sits down by it, and prepares a *coboba* for it. . . . And having made the *coboba*, he rises, and pronounces all its titles as if it were a great lord, and says to it: "Tell me who you are and what you are doing here, and what you want of me and why you summoned me. Tell me if you want me to cut you down, and if you wish to come with me, and how you want me to carry you; for I shall build a house for you and endow it with land." Then that *cemi* or tree, become an idol or devil, tells him the shape in which it wants to be made. And the sorcerer cuts it down and carves it into the shape that it has ordered, builds a house for it and endows it with land; and many times a year he makes *coboba* for it.

This *coboba* is their means of praying to the idol and also of asking it for riches. When they wish to know if they will gain a victory over their enemies, they enter a hut to which only the principal men are admitted. And the lord is the first to make the *coboba* and plays an instrument; and while he makes the *coboba* none may speak. After he has finished his prayer he remains for some time with bowed head and arms resting on his knees; then he lifts his head, looks up to the sky, and speaks. All respond to him in a loud voice, and having spoken, they all give thanks; and he relates the vision he had while stupefied with the *coboba* that he snuffed up his nose and that went to his head. He tells that he has spoken with the *cemi* and that they will gain the victory, or that their enemies will flee, or that there will be many deaths, or wars, or famines, or the like, or whatever comes to his addled head to say. One can imagine the state he is in, for they say the house appears to him to be turned upside-down and the people to be walking with their feet in the air. This *coboba* they make not only for the *cemis* of stone and wood but also for the bodies of the dead, as told above.

There are different kinds of stone *cemis*. Some the doctors extract from bodies of sick people, and it is believed these are the best to induce childbirth in pregnant women. There are other *cemis* that speak; these have the shape of a large turnip with leaves that trail over the ground and are as long as the leaves of the caper bush; these leaves generally resemble those of the elm, others have three points: The natives believe they help the yucca grow. The root resembles that of the radish, and the leaf generally has six or seven points. I know not with what to compare it, because I have seen no plant like it in Spain or in any other country. The stalk of the yucca is as high as a man.

Now I shall tell of their beliefs concerning their

idols and *cemis*, and how they are greatly deluded by them. . . .

▷ Pane now narrates stories about a variety of famous *cemis*. The following two stories are typical.

XXII. Concerning another *cemi* named *Opiyelguovirán*, who belonged to a principal man named *Cavavaniová*, who had many vassals.¹³ They say this *cemi* *Opiyelguovirán* had four legs, like a dog, and was made of wood, and frequently left his house by night and went into the woods. They would go in search of him, and bring him back to the house tied with cords, but he always returned to the woods. They say that when the Spaniards arrived on the island of Española, this *cemi* fled and went to a lagoon; they followed him there by his tracks, but never saw him again, and know nothing more of him. That is the story they tell, and faithfully do I tell it again.

XXIII. Concerning another *cemi* named *Guabancex*. This *cemi* lived in the land of a principal cacique,¹⁴ named *Aumatex*. It is a woman, and they say she has two other *cemis* for companions; one is a herald and the other is the collector and governor of the waters. They say that when *Guabancex* is angry, she raises the winds and water, throws down houses, and tears up the trees. They say this *cemi* is a woman and is made of stones of that country. Her herald, named *Guatauba*, carries out her orders by making the other *cemis* of the province help in raising wind and rain. Her other companion is named *Coatrisquí*; of him they say that he collects the waters in the valleys between the mountains and then lets them loose to destroy the countryside. The people hold this to be gospel truth.

¹³Subordinates.

¹⁴The Taino word for *chief*, which has spread to both the Spanish and English languages.

Quiché Mayan Gods and Monarchs



99 ▼ *THE BOOK OF THE COMMUNITY*

Among all the peoples of ancient America, only the Meso-Americans created systems of writing, although the Quechua-speaking people of the Andes, who carved out the Inca Empire, devised a system of record keeping by means of knotted strings that served almost as well (source 100). Of all the forms of writing used in Central America, the *Maya* had the most sophisticated, an exceedingly complex system based on a wide range of picture-symbols, technically known as *glyphs*, that variously represented objects, concepts, and sounds. Unfortunately, Spanish missionaries, zealous to destroy all remnants of indigenous paganism, burned most of the books of the *Maya*. Only three preconquest Mayan books, and fragments of a fourth, survived the fires of the Spanish Catholic Inquisition. Nevertheless, three factors allow us to know more about the preconquest *Maya* than any other Amerindian civilization: (1) recently scholars broke the code of the *Mayas'* ancient written language, enabling historians to read most of their texts and engraved monuments; (2) the classical *Maya* left behind a rich archeological heritage, which is still being explored and interpreted; and (3) the *Maya*, as a people and culture, survive and even flourish today in Guatemala, Belize, and Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula, preserving much of their past in their living traditions.

The document that appears here dates from shortly after the early sixteenth-century Spanish conquest of the *Quiché* *Maya* of Guatemala, the most powerful of the then-existing Mayan states of Central America. The *Maya*, who had a shared culture but were never organized under a single central authority, had reached their classical heights between about 300 and 800, but by 900 had abandoned many of their cities and ceremonial centers. Yet even with the collapse of many of their states and urban centers, the *Maya* persisted as a culture and even built a few new cities. When the army of Pedro de Alvarado invaded the territory of the *Quiché* in 1524, it found a vigorous society that initially offered spirited resistance. Eventually, however, the Spaniards prevailed.

Faced with the threat of losing all memory of the *Mayan* way of life, an anonymous *Quiché* Indian, who was at least nominally a convert to Catholic Christianity, undertook to compile, in his native tongue, a collection of *Mayan* beliefs, traditions, and history down to 1550, because, as he noted: "The original book, written long ago, existed, but its sight is hidden to the searcher." The result was the *Popol Vuh*, or *Book of the Community*. The *Popol Vuh* remained hidden for about 150 years until it was discovered by a sympathetic Spanish priest, who was also a scholar of the *Quiché* culture. He transcribed the text from its manuscript, thereby preserving the original *Quiché* version, and translated it into Spanish, in order "to bring to light what had been among the Indians in the olden days {and} . . . to give information on the errors which they had in their paganism and which they still adhere to among themselves."

The following selection tells about *Tohil*, chief god of the Quiché Maya, and his relationship with the *Ahpop*, or Quiché monarch, in the era preceding the coming of the Spaniards.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. What special functions did the ancient Quiché monarchs have? Why did the monarchs fast?
2. What were the mutual responsibilities of monarch and subjects? What do they suggest about this society?
3. How was the Quiché state ruled? What does its having three royal houses suggest?
4. What did the people owe Tohil? What was expected in return?
5. How do we know that Tohil was a syncretic deity, whose manifestations and functions were drawn from a variety of sources? What does this suggest about the make-up of the Quiché state?
6. What evidence is there that the Quiché saw themselves as belonging to a single culture, despite their tribal divisions?
7. What allows us to infer that postclassical Quiché civilization was still vibrant?

We shall now tell of the House of the God. The house was also given the same name as the god. The Great Edifice of Tohil was the name of the Temple of Tohil, of those of Cavec.¹ . . .

Tzutuhá, which is seen in Cahbahá,² is the name of a large edifice in which there was a stone which all the lords of Quiché worshiped and which was also worshiped by all the tribes.

The people first offered their sacrifices before Tohil, and afterward went to pay their respects to the Ahpop and the Ahpop-Camhá.³ Then they went to present their gorgeous feathers and their tribute before the king. And the kings whom they maintained were the Ahpop and the Ahpop-Camhá, who had conquered their towns.

Great lords and wonderful men were the marvelous kings Gucumatz and Cotuhá, the mar-

velous kings Quicab and Cavizimah.⁴ They knew if there would be war, and everything was clear before their eyes; they saw if there would be death and hunger, if there would be strife. They well know that there was a place where it could be seen, that there was a book which they called the *Popol Vuh*.

But not only in this way was the estate of the lords great, great also were their fasts. And this was in recognition of their having been created, and in recognition of their having been given their kingdoms. They fasted a long time and made sacrifices to their gods. Here is how they fasted: Nine men fasted and another nine made sacrifices⁵ and burned incense. Thirteen more men fasted, and another thirteen more made offerings and burned incense before Tohil. And

¹The principal branch of the Quiché people.

²The name of the ceremonial center where the temple called *Tzutuhá* was located.

³The Ahpop-Camhá was a coreigning subking. Both the Ahpop and Ahpop-Camhá came from the chief royal family of the Quiché people, the *Cavec*.

⁴Gucumatz and Cotuhá were Ahpop and Ahpop-Camhá

during the fifth generation of the twelve generations of Cavec monarchs who ruled the Quiché prior to the Spanish conquest. They were the first of a line of sorcerer-kings. Quicab and Cavizimah were seventh-generation Cavec monarchs.

⁵Possibly human sacrifices.

while before their god, they nourished themselves only with fruits, with *zapotes*, *matasanos*, and *jocotes*. And they did not eat any *tortillas*. Now if there were seventeen men who made sacrifice, or ten who fasted, the truth is they did not eat. They fulfilled their great precepts, and thus showed their position as lords.

Neither had they women to sleep with, but they remained alone, fasting. They were in the House of God, all day they prayed, burning incense and making sacrifices. Thus they remained from dusk until dawn, grieving in their hearts and in their breasts, and begging for happiness and life for their sons and vassals as well as for their kingdom, and raising their faces to the sky.

Here are their petitions to their god, when they prayed; and this was the supplication of their hearts:

"Oh, Thou, beauty of the day! Thou, Huracán;⁶ Thou, Heart of Heaven and of Earth! Thou, giver of richness, and giver of the daughters and the sons! Turn toward us your power and your riches; grant life and growth unto my sons and vassals; let those who must maintain and nourish Thee multiply and increase; those who invoke Thee on the roads, in the fields, on the banks of the rivers, in the ravines, under the trees, under the vines.

"Give them daughters and sons. Let them not meet disgrace, nor misfortune, let not the deceiver come behind or before them. Let them not fall, let them not be wounded, let them not fornicate, nor be condemned by justice. Let them not fall on the descent or on the ascent of the road. Let them not encounter obstacles back of them or before them, nor anything which strikes them. Grant them good roads, beautiful, level roads. Let them not have misfortune, nor disgrace, through Thy fault, through Thy sorceries.

"Grant a good life to those who must give Thee sustenance and place food in Thy mouth, in Thy

presence, to Thee, Heart of Heaven, Heart of Earth, Bundle of Majesty. And Thou, Tohil; Thou, Avilix;⁷ Thou, Hacavitz,⁸ Arch of the Sky, Surface of the Earth, the Four Corners, the Four Cardinal Points. Let there be but peace and tranquility in Thy mouth, in Thy presence, oh, God!"

Thus [spoke] the lords, while within, the nine men fasted, the thirteen men, and the seventeen men. During the day they fasted and their hearts grieved for their sons and vassals and for all their wives and their children when each of the lords made his offering.

This was the price of a happy life, the price of power, the price of the authority of the Ahpop, of the Ahpop-Camhá, of the Galel and of the Ahtzic-Vinac.⁹ Two by two they ruled, each pair succeeding the other in order to bear the burden of the people of all the Quiché nation.

One only was the origin of their tradition and [one only] the origin of the manner of maintaining and sustaining, and one only, too, was the origin of the tradition and the customs of those of Tamub and Ilocab and the people of Rabinal and the Cakchiquel, those of Tziquinahá, of Tuhalahá and Uchabahá.¹⁰ And there was but one trunk [a single family] when they heard there in Quiché what all of them were to do.

But it was not only thus that they reigned. They did not squander the gifts of those whom they sustained and nourished, but they ate and drank them. Neither did they buy them; they had won and seized their empire, their power, and their sovereignty.

And it was not at small cost, that they conquered the fields and the towns; the small towns and the large towns paid high ransoms; they brought precious stones and metals, they brought honey of the bees, bracelets, bracelets of emeralds and other stones, and brought garlands made of blue feathers, the tribute of all the towns. They

⁶One of Tohil's names.

⁷The god of Balam-Acab, one of the founders of the Quiché state.

⁸The god of the Ahau-Quiché, one of the three royal houses of the Quiché (see note 9).

⁹The Quiché had three royal houses. The Cavec supplied its two chief rulers (note 3). The Galel was a court official who was also king of the House of Nihai; the Ahtzic-Vinac was head of the House of Ahau Quiché.

¹⁰Various Quiché tribes and regions.

came into the presence of the marvelous kings Gucumatz and Cotuhá, and before Quicab and Cavizimah,¹¹ the Ahpop, the Ahpop-Camhá, the Galel, and the Ahtzic-Vinac.

It was not little what they did, neither were few, the tribes which they conquered. Many branches of the tribes came to pay tribute to the

Quiché; full of sorrow they came to give it over. Nevertheless, the [Quiché] power did not grow quickly. Gucumatz it was, who began the aggrandizement of the kingdom. Thus was the beginning of his aggrandizement and that of the Quiché nation.

¹¹See note 4.

Governing the Inca Empire



100 ▼ *Pedro de Cieza de León, CHRONICLES*

Because no society of South America developed a system of writing, there are no written records of South America's civilizations prior to the arrival of the Spaniards. Our best sources for their preconquest history are, therefore, archeological artifacts and accounts composed by sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Amerindian and Spanish writers who labored to preserve the memory of a past in imminent danger of being lost forever. One such ethnohistorian was Pedro de Cieza de León (1520–1554), who in 1535 arrived in the Americas as a teenage soldier-adventurer and spent the next seventeen years trekking throughout South America, falling increasingly under the spell of the continent and its native peoples. As he traveled and fought, he constantly took detailed notes of all he had observed and experienced. Believing, as he noted, that “we and the Indians have the same origin,” Cieza wrote with great sympathy for the many different Amerindian cultures he encountered, even though he seems never to have doubted the righteousness of the Spanish conquest and conversion of these peoples. Indeed, one of his primary reasons for recording his observations was that he considered it “right that the world know how so great a multitude of these Indians were brought into the sanctity of the Church.”

Although Cieza's *Chronicles* describe many different native South American cultures, their greatest value to modern historians is the wealth of detail they provide of the Inca Empire and the Quechua Amerindians who had created it. Like the Aztecs of Mexico far to their north, the Quechuas were recent arrivals on the scene who fashioned a civilization that borrowed heavily from a variety of preceding cultures. Also like the Aztec Empire, the Inca Empire was young, having taken shape during the reigns of Pachacuti (1438–1471) and his son Topac Yupanqui (1471–1493). As was also true in Mexico, its life was prematurely cut short by *conquistadores*.

In the following selection Cieza describes how the Inca monarchs governed an empire that covered about one-half million square miles, stretched some twenty-five hundred miles from end to end, and included anywhere from six to thirteen million people of different ethnic origins and languages.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. What devices did the Incas use to govern their vast empire?
2. How did the Inca Empire manage to function without a system of writing?
3. From Cieza's perspective, what were the most admirable qualities of this empire?
4. What appear to have been the strengths of this empire? Can you perceive any weaknesses? Were the Incas aware of these shortcomings, and, if so, how did they attempt to counter them?

It is told for a fact of the rulers of this kingdom that in the days of their rule they had their representatives in the capitals of all the provinces, . . . for in all these places there were larger and finer lodgings than in most of the other cities of this great kingdom, and many storehouses. They served as the head of the provinces or regions, and from every so many leagues¹ around the tributes were brought to one of these capitals, and from so many others, to another. This was so well organized that there was not a village that did not know where it was to send its tribute. In all these capitals the Incas had temples of the sun, mints, and many silversmiths who did nothing but work rich pieces of gold or fair vessels of silver; large garrisons were stationed there, and, as I have said, a steward or representative who was in command of them all, to whom an accounting of everything that was brought in was made, and who, in turn, had to give one of all that was issued. And these governors could in no way interfere with the jurisdiction of another who held a similar post, but within his own, if there were any disorder or disturbance, he had authority to punish it[s perpetrators], especially if it were in the nature of a conspiracy or a rebellion, or failure to obey the Inca,² for full power

resided in these governors. And if the Incas had not had the foresight to appoint them and to establish the *mitimaes*,³ the natives would have often revolted and shaken off the royal rule; but with the many troops and the abundance of provisions, they could not effect this unless they had all plotted such treason or rebellion together. This happened rarely, for these governors who were named were of complete trust, all of them *Orejones*,⁴ and most of them had their holdings, or *chacaras*, in the neighborhood of *Cuzco*,⁵ and their homes and kinfolk. If one of them did not show sufficient capacity for his duties, he was removed and another put in his place.

When one of them came to Cuzco on private business or to see the Inca, he left a lieutenant in his place, not one who aspired to the post, but one he knew would faithfully carry out what he was ordered to do and what was best for the service of the Inca. And if one of these governors or delegates died while in office, the natives at once sent word to the Inca how and of what he had died, and even transported the body by the post road if this seemed to them advisable. The tribute paid by each of these districts where the capital was situated and that turned over by the natives, whether gold, silver, clothing, arms, and

¹A league is three miles.

²*Inca* means "sovereign lord," and in its strictest sense should be used only to refer to this civilization's god-kings. Today, however, historians customarily use the term loosely to refer to the civilization, its empire, and the Quechua people who created them.

³Literally, "those moved from one land to another." This was the systematic practice of resettling groups from one area of the empire to another. These resettled people would serve as a check on the loyalties of the natives of the region

to which they had been transferred and would, in turn, be kept in check by their new neighbors. This helped keep down rebellions and broke down regional and ethnic differences within the empire; it also was a means of cultivating land that needed settlers.

⁴Literally in Spanish, "big-ears." They were members of the ruling class, often of royal blood, who were distinguished by the large ear plugs they wore.

⁵The capital city of the empire.

all else they gave, was entered in the accounts of . . . [those] who kept the *quipus*⁶ and did everything ordered by the governor in the matter of finding the soldiers or supplying whomever the Inca ordered, or making delivery to Cuzco; but when they came from the city of Cuzco to go over the accounts, or they were ordered to go to Cuzco to give an accounting, the accountants themselves gave it by the quipus, or went to give it where there could be no fraud, but everything had to come out right. Few years went by in which an accounting of all these things was not made. . . .

Realizing how difficult it would be to travel the great distances of their land where every league and at every turn a different language was spoken, and how bothersome it would be to have to employ interpreters to understand them, these rulers, as the best measure, ordered and decreed, with severe punishment for failure to obey, that all the natives of their empire should know and understand the language of Cuzco, both they and their women. This was so strictly enforced that an infant had not yet left its mother's breast before they began to teach it the language it had to know. And although at the beginning this was difficult and many stubbornly refused to learn any language but their own, the Incas were so forceful that they accomplished what they had proposed, and all had to do their bidding. This was carried out so faithfully that in the space of a few years a single tongue was known and used in an extension of more than 1,200 leagues, yet, even though this language was employed, they all spoke their own [languages], which were so numerous that if I were to list them it would not be credited. . . .

As the city of Cuzco was the most important in all Peru, and the Incas lived there most of the time, they had with them in the city many of the leading men of the country, the most intelligent and informed of all, as their advisers. For all agree that before they undertook anything of

importance, they discussed it with these counselors, and submitted their opinion to that of the majority. And for the administration of the city, and that the highways should be safe and nowhere should offenses or thefts be committed, from among the most highly esteemed of them he [the Inca] appointed those whose duty it was to punish wrongdoers, and to this end they were always traveling about the country. The Incas took such care to see that justice was meted out that nobody ventured to commit a felony or theft. This was to deal with thieves, ravishers of women, or conspirators against the Inca; however, there were many provinces that warred on one another, and the Incas were not wholly able to prevent this.

By the river that runs through Cuzco justice was executed on those who were caught or brought in as prisoners from some other place. There they had their heads cut off, or were put to death in some other manner which they chose. Mutiny and conspiracy were severely punished, and, above all, those who were thieves and known as such; even their wives and children were despised and considered to be tarred with the same brush. . . .

We have written how it was ordered by the Incas that the statues be brought out at their feasts, and how they selected from the wisest among their men those who should tell what the life of their kings had been and how they had conducted themselves in the rule of their kingdoms, for the purpose I have stated. It should also be known that, aside from this, it was the custom among them, and a rule carefully observed, for each of them to choose during his reign three or four old men of their nation, skilled and gifted for that purpose, whom they ordered to recall all that had happened in the province during the time of their reign, whether prosperous or adverse, and to make and arrange songs so that thereby it might be known in the future what had taken place in the past. Such songs

⁶The Quechua system of record keeping by means of knotted strings that León describes later in this excerpt.

could not be sung or proclaimed outside the presence of the Inca, and those who were to carry out this behest were ordered to say nothing referring to the Inca during his lifetime, but after he was dead, they said to his successor almost in these words: "Oh, mighty and powerful Inca, may the Sun and Moon, the Earth, the hills and trees, the stones and your forefathers guard you from misfortune and make you prosperous, happy, and blessed among all who have been born. Know that the things that happened to your predecessor were these." And saying this, with their eyes on the ground and heads hanging, with great humility they gave an account and report of all they knew, which they could do very well, for there were many among them of great memory, subtle wit, and lively intelligence, and abounding in knowledge, as those of us who are here and hear them can bear witness. After they said this, when the Inca had heard them, he sent for other of his old Indians whom he ordered to learn the songs the others bore in their memory, and to prepare new ones of what took place during the time of his reign, what was spent, what the provinces contributed, and put all this down in the quipus, so that after his death, when his successor reigned, what had been given and contributed would be known. And except on days of great celebration, or on the occasion of mourning and lament for the death of a brother or son of the Inca, for on such days it was permitted to relate their grandeur and their origin and birth, at no other time was it permitted to deal with this, for it had been forbidden by their lords, and if they did so, they were severely punished.

[The Indians] had a method of knowing how the tributes of food supplies should be levied on the provinces when the Lord-Inca came through with his army, or was visiting the kingdom; or, when nothing of this sort was taking place, what came into the storehouses and what was issued to the subjects, so nobody could be unduly burdened. . . . This involved the quipus, which are long strands of knotted strings, and those who were the accountants and understood the mean-

ing of these knots could reckon by them expenditures or other things that had taken place many years before. By these knots they counted from one to ten and from ten to a hundred, and from a hundred to a thousand. On one of these strands there is the account of one thing, and on the other of another, in such a way that what to us is a strange, meaningless account is clear to them. In the capital of each province there were accountants whom they called *quipu-camayocs*, and by these knots they kept the account of the tribute to be paid by the natives of that district in silver, gold, clothing, flocks, down to wood and other more insignificant things, and by these same quipus at the end of a year, or ten, or twenty years, they gave a report to the one whose duty it was to check the account so exact that not even a pair of sandals was missing. . . .

The *Orejones* of Cuzco who supplied me with information are in agreement that in olden times, in the days of the Lord-Incas, all the villages and provinces of Peru were notified that a report should be given to the rulers and their representatives each year of the men and women who had died, and all who had been born, for this was necessary for the levying of the tributes as well as to know how many were available for war and those who could assume the defense of the villages. This was an easy matter, for each province at the end of the year had a list by the knots of the quipus of all the people who had died there during the year, as well as of those who had been born. At the beginning of the new year they came to Cuzco, bringing their quipus, which told how many births there had been during the year, and how many deaths. This was reported with all truth and accuracy, without any fraud or deceit. In this way the Inca and the governors knew which of the Indians were poor, the women who had been widowed, whether they were able to pay their taxes, and how many men they could count on in the event of war, and many other things they considered highly important.

As this kingdom was so vast, as I have repeatedly mentioned, in each of the many provinces there were many storehouses filled with supplies

and other needful things; thus, in times of war, wherever the armies went they drew upon the contents of these storehouses, without ever touching the supplies of their confederates or laying a finger on what they had in their settlements. And when there was no war, all this stock of supplies and food was divided up among the poor and the widows. These poor were the aged, or the lame, crippled, or paralyzed, or those afflicted with some other diseases; if they were in good health, they received nothing. Then the storehouses were filled up once more with the tributes paid the Inca. If there came a lean year, the storehouses were opened and the provinces were lent what they needed in the way of supplies; then, in a year of abundance, they paid back all they had received. Even though the tributes paid to the Inca were used only for the aforesaid purposes, they were employed to advantage, for in this way their kingdom was opulent and well supplied.

No one who was lazy or tried to live by the work of others was tolerated; everyone had to work. Thus on certain days each lord went to his lands and took the plow in hand and cultivated the earth, and did other things. Even the Incas themselves did this to set an example, for everybody was to know that there should be nobody so rich that, on this account, he might disdain or affront the poor. And under their system there was none such in all the kingdom, for, if he had his health, he worked and lacked for nothing; and if he was ill, he received what he needed from the storehouses. And no rich man could deck himself out in more finery than the poor, or wear different clothing, except the rulers and headmen, who, to maintain their dignity, were allowed great freedom and privilege, as well as the *Orejones*, who held a place apart among all the peoples.

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Part One ▼ The Ancient World

Chapter 1

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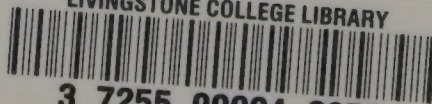
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